

Of Destruction and Rebirth

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/35427001) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/35427001>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Major Character Death , Rape/Non-Con , Underage Sex , Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Categories:	M/M , F/M
Fandoms:	魔道祖师 - 墨香铜臭 Módào Zǔshī - Mòxiāng Tóngxiù , 魔道祖师 Módào Zǔshī (Cartoon) , 天官赐福 - 墨香铜臭 Tiān Guān Cì Fú - Mòxiāng Tóngxiù , 陈情令 The Untamed (TV)
Relationships:	Lan Zhan Lan Wangji/Wei Ying Wei Wuxian , Jiang Yanli/Jin Zixuan
Characters:	Lan Zhan Lan Wangji , Lan Yuan Lan Sizhui , Wei Ying Wei Wuxian , Xie Lian (Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Jiang Cheng Jiang Wanyin , Lan Huan Lan Xichen , Nie Huaisang , Nie Mingjue , Wen Ning Wen Qionglin , Meng Yao Jin Guangyao , Jin Ling Jin Rulan , Yu Ziyuan , Jiang Fengmian , Wen Qing (Modao Zushi) , Jin Zixuan , Jiang Yanli , Mo Xuanyu , Xiao Xingchen , Jin Guangshan , Lan Qiren , Su She Su Minshan , Sect Leader Yao (Modao Zushi)
Additional Tags:	Slow Burn , Canonical Character Death , GodWWX , God Verse , BAMF Wei Ying Wei Wuxian , Grieving Lan Zhan Lan Wangji , Angst and Hurt/Comfort , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Alternate Universe - Gods & Goddesses , Jiang Cheng Jiang Wanyin & Wei Ying Wei Wuxian Reconciliation , Rabbits , Fix-It , Attempted Sexual Assault , Attempted Rape/Non-Con , Canon-Typical Violence , Blood and Gore , Castration , Lots of it , repeatedly , Punishment , Hell , Podfic Welcome
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Of Destruction and Rebirth
Collections:	The Untamed FF , Alternative Universes of Fandoms I enjoy , Fanfics that give me the feels , Ashes' Library , Wangxianfavorites7 , MDZS Golden Collection , Fics That Make Me Feel Good , Suggested Good Reads , The Cream of the Crop , mdzs tgcf crossover that make me experience joy , Into another world , SVSSS/MDZS/TGCF , ART GALLERY: Stories of art and artistic aus (Please read description thank you) , Rain Recs , Favorites , Mo Dao Zu Shi , Why sleep? We have great stories! , uzen: i like this a Normal amount , fics that pop into my head at 3am and won't let me rest until i reread them , THE 🎵 UBIQ 🦋💀 THE 🌈🌈 UNIQUE 🌹 , Chénqíng's Tales , Dyska_Delights , The 🌈 Fairest 🌈 of Them All , Wwwwww , Val's fave fics , 🌸Petal's Treasury of Timeless Tales for the Heart and Soul🌸 , AllLoveForYouDear
Stats:	Published: 2021-11-30 Completed: 2022-05-04 Words: 88,884 Chapters: 19/19

Of Destruction and Rebirth

by [demoniq](#)

Summary

Wei Ying died horribly in the Burial Mounds, with the destruction of the Stygian Tiger Seal being his weapon of choice. He thought that it would all end with his death.

But alas, there truly is no rest for the wicked (or so he thought), when he awakened on a single plank road surrounded by darkness. Just as he feared that he was in his own personal hell, a heavenly official informs him that he is, in fact, now a God.

Inspired by the GodWWX verse in my WWX November Mayhem Prompts.

Translation into Español available: Of Destruction and Rebirth by [Liz_Hdz](#)

Translation into Português brasileiro available: Of Destruction and Rebirth (Tradução) by [DaiaSouza](#)

Notes

What am I doing!? I just started a new fic this week and here's another! But I couldn't help myself because this idea has been beating me up everyday since I wrote it in the WWX November Mayhem Prompts (and I still haven't finished that, the horror). Welp. It's too late now. Here, enjoy chapter one of the God Verse.

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

- Translation into Español available: [Of Destruction and Rebirth](#) by [Liz_Hdz](#)
- Translation into Português brasileiro available: [De destruição e renascimento\(TRANSLUÇÃO\)](#) by [Hasunohana](#)

An Awakening

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It started with a whisper.

Wake up

His consciousness returned in slow increments, with first a whisper. Then, a glimmer of light in his eyes brought back his vision. He took a deep breath of the crisp, clean air, lungs expanding full for the first time. He tried to swallow but his mouth was dry and so was his throat.

It was then that he realised that he could hear the sounds of water lapping against something, like a long forgotten dream. If he focused properly, he thought he could hear the sounds of three children laughing as they played in the water.

When he was aware enough to untangle his limbs and straighten from his fetal position, he felt stiff and gangly, unused to his limbs like a newly born colt. He straightened himself and slowly pushed himself to stand while looking down at himself. He was wearing black robes, thick but silk-like, flowing on his skin like water. His hands looked like his own but there were no scars and aches that he was so used to.

He felt new, like he had been reborn.

"You have. Been reborn, so to speak."

He looked over to the source of the voice and saw a beautiful young man in white with a weimao atop his head, drifting gently to stand beside him. Around his neck and wrists were equally white bindings that flowed with the non-existent wind.

"Who are you?" he asked hoarsely. Then, a pause. "Who am I?"

The man in white smiled kindly. "You are Wei Ying, courtesy name Wei Wuxian."

"I don't..." Wei Ying frowned, trying to remember but there were only flashes of images in his aching head.

"Don't worry. You'll remember soon enough," the other being said. "Your death was painful and traumatic so it'll take time for your mind to make sense of things and compartmentalize."

"Death?" Wei Ying parroted, flashes of green and pain flashing across his mind.

"Don't force it," the young man said, reaching out slowly. Wei Ying flinched instinctively but the gentle touch on his head only served to ease the pounding pain in his head.

"How...? Are you a healer?" Wei Ying asked, touching his head, which felt exponentially better, as if he had been given a miracle hangover cure.

"Ah no. I'm just a simple god," the young man said pleasantly. "My name is Xie Lian."

Wei Ying paused, wide-eyed. This was when he realised that he was in a place completely dark with only stars to light their surroundings. He was standing on a wooden pier, reminiscent of those in...

In Lotus Pier. Where he grew up with his siblings. Except narrower.

But there were no other buildings except miles of water and the wooden pier.

Just a single plank road.

"Where am I?" Wei Ying asked in apprehension. "Am I in hell?"

"Oh no. You are in your realm," the young... god? said, looking around. "I admit there's some renovation that needs to be done but that's entirely up to you."

"What..? What does that mean? My realm?" Wei Ying asked, now in complete confusion.

"This is the realm of the dark," answered Xie Lian easily. "Now it is your domain."

"What-? Why?" Wei Ying questioned in bewilderment.

"Because you are now the god of this realm," explained Xie Lian gently.

"A god?" Wei Ying repeated in complete disbelief. "A god? Why a god? I've killed a lot of people. Tortured them. I've desecrated so many graves. I've... I don't understand... I caused so many deaths."

"You killed the Xuanwu," Xie Lian calmly answered. "You should have ascended then."

"Lan Zhan killed the Xuanwu," Wei Ying answered automatically.

"You both did," the older being answered easily in return. "You developed dark cultivation. "

"Demonic Cultivation," Wei Ying interrupted again.

"Dark Cultivation," Xie Lian corrected serenely. "Demonic cultivation is used by demons, not humans."

Wei Ying paused. Huh, that argument was sound. Why hadn't he thought of that before?

"You may have killed a lot of people," Xie Lian continued without a hitch. "But you have also saved a lot more."

"I didn't save anyone," Wei Ying denied. "Everyone died!"

"You saved your brother," Xie Lian answered quickly.

"I didn't!" Wei Ying protested. "I'm the reason Lotus Pier was attacked. If that didn't happen, Jiang Cheng wouldn't-"

"You gave him your golden core and saved him, didn't you?" Xie Lian interjected, making Wei Ying shut mouth with a snap. "Because he was precious to you."

"And Lotus Pier would have burned anyway," the Flower-Crowned Martial God continued, "because Wen Rouhan would never have stopped until he burned everything to the ground."

"Your actions saved the sects and the common people. So never think that what you did is inconsequential." Xie Lian finished.

Wei Ying still looked unconvinced but Xie Lian patted him on the shoulder.

"In time, you will understand what I mean," the former Crown Prince of Xianle said. "As immortals, we have all the time to learn from our mistakes, make amends for it and come to terms with everything."

Wei Ying stared at the ground for a long while, before he spoke again. "You said I'm a god. What kind of god am I? God of the Dark? God of Death?"

"Close. But not quite. You are now Fuxing Zushi *," said the heavenly being. "The Venerable Patriarch of Renewal."

"The God of Destruction and Rebirth."

It started with a whisper.

The boy, merely three years old, had wandered away from his inattentive father when a pretty butterfly on a string caught his attention.

He followed after the bobbing little jade pendant, not paying attention to where he was going until he lost sight of the pretty butterfly as its owner turned into a building with red lanterns at the front.

The little boy then turned around, looking for his parent who was no where to be seen by now. Distressed, the boy toddled off after someone who looked like his father but was not.

The man, unaware of his little shadow, walked out of the village centre while whistling merrily to himself.

The boy followed after as best as he could but soon fell behind just as they left village, leaving the poor boy in the middle of the wilderness. As dark fell and the moon began to show its pale face, the little boy's cries began to taper.

"Die-die..." the little boy whimpered, tears streaming down his round cheeks as he fell on bum. He'd been walking for so long that his feet hurt and he was so scared because it was so dark. And there were scary sounds around him and glowing eyes in the bushes.

Over here

"Die-die..." the boy called out plaintively.

Over here

"Die-die!" the boy tried again, confused when his father didn't show up.

Over here

The little boy looked up just as a glowing ball of light materialised into a young man, who peered down at him in concern.

"Did you get lost, little one?" the young man asked, smiling at him prettily.

"Uhn," the toddler nodded, sniffing miserably. "Gege, hungry."

"Oh, you poor thing," crooned the young man, kneeling down beside him with no care for his beautiful black silk robes. From his sleeve, he pulled out a warm bun and gave it to the little boy, reminding the starving child to eat slowly when he tried to stuff it all into his mouth. Then, he gently pulled the boy into his arms and stood up.

"Let's get you home, shall we?" he said, brushing the tears on the boy's cheeks with his sleeve. The gege's hand was cool to the touch but the material of his robes were soft, unlike the rough linen of his parent's clothes.

The little boy nodded and when he finished the bun, he snuggled into the man's shoulder, falling easily into sleep as the man floated off into the sky.

When he woke up, they were on the street where his house was located. The gege put him down on his feet and pointed straight to his house.

"Your mama is waiting for you, baobao," the gege said, smiling down at him gently. The moon was shining brightly behind his head, like a halo and the radiance of it made the boy gape, his little mouth shaped like an 'O'.

"Remember to always stay with your die-die next time," the beautiful young man reminded, a gentle hand sweeping on his head. "Now, you should go. Your mama is right there."

The little boy turned towards his house and sure enough, there was his mother coming out of the house with a worried look on her face, wringing her fingers as she looked out into the darkness.

"Mama!"

She stared in shock and put her hands on her mouth when she registered the sight of her missing son.

"Baobao!"

His mother ran out of the gate and threw her arms around her toddler, bursting into tears at the relief of finally having her son in her arms.

"Baobao! Mama was so scared! Where did you go!?" she blubbered as her son patted her back.

Just hours ago, he had been crying non-stop for his parents but after the young man arrived, he felt safe and comfortable enough that he no longer felt scared.

"How did you get home?" his mama asked.

"Yue-gege took me home," the little boy answered. "We fly and baobao woke up home."

The woman wrinkled her forehead as she tried to decipher her son's words. Yue-gege? Brother Moon?

She looked towards the direction her baby came from and only saw the twinkling of starlight beneath a glowing circular moon.

Perhaps because the Burial Mounds was where he self-destructed that Wei Wuxian visited the place first when he returned to the mortal world for the first time since he ascended.

It had taken him months? years? decades? (who knows, time in his realm flows so differently) before he got accustomed to his responsibilities, and that was with the guidance of Ling Wen, Dianxia and Yama. If he didn't have their help, he wouldn't even know where to begin.

Nevertheless, it was only after he'd managed to clear all his backlog that he could finally make time to visit the mortal world. Surprisingly, it hadn't been that long since his death. Maybe only 2 years have passed, so he probably hadn't missed much.

The Burial Mounds still looked the same, at least, if not more desolate without Wei Ying there to cleanse it with Chenqing.

Wei Ying sighed, thinking of his black flute. He still missed it. Even if he could easily forge another one from the black bamboo of the Burial Mounds, it still wouldn't be the same. Chenqing had followed him through the thick and thin of his life that it just wouldn't be right to replace it. Just like it was never a replacement for Suibian.

I wonder who has them, he thought idly to himself as he floated gently over the Burial Mounds. Perhaps he will go retrieve both Chenqing and Suibian after he was done with this.

His feet landed on the ground and immediately, little shoots of green started blooming around him. It was one of the things that had perplexed him in the beginning, but he soon realised that it only happened when he touched something that was ruined, like a burnt out forest caused by wildfire, and of course, the desecrated grounds of the Burial Mounds. It would be a different story if he stood in the middle of a lush forest. He was not the God of Spring or New Life, after all.

He took steps towards the homes that the Wen remnants had built, leaving behind a growing collection of foliage. Wistfully, he gently touched the broken wood and planks left behind by the siege, reminiscing the good times that they had. However short the time he had with them, every second of it was very precious to him. When he had visited every home and touched every one of them, he headed towards the Demon Slaughtering Cave.

His workshop was bare of things and whatever that was left behind was strewn carelessly and left to rot. He surmised that the sects must have ransacked his workshop hoping to retrieve the schematics for the Stygian Tiger Seal. Well, if they wanted to destroy themselves, they were welcomed to it.

He walked further into cave, where the blood pool lay, where he knew that there were some souls there that were precious to him.

It was time for them to move on.

It didn't take long at all.

He lifted his hand over the blood pool and willed them all out. Slowly, one by one, the remnants of the Wen clan materialised into ghostly forms in front of him. Upfront was a slumped elderly lady that tilted her head to smile at him softly.

Wei Ying sniffled as tears came to his eyes.

"Popo," he said gently. "It's time to go. I'm here to take all of you to the afterlife."

Wen-popo's face looked worried as she looked around the gathered aunts and uncles.

"It's okay, Wen Qing is waiting for all of you," he answered. "Wen Ning, I will retrieve him soon. Though it will be unlikely that he will choose to join all of you. At least, not yet."

He put his hand on her shoulder, though he shouldn't be able to touch her semi-corporeal form, his connection to the afterlife allowed him that leeway.

"First, all of you have to be put to rest. Then, the rest of Burial Mounds," Wei Wuxian said. "You all deserve it."

Wen-popo looked down at her empty hands, as if lamenting the loss of something.

"Don't worry, popo. A-Yuan is safe," Wei Ying told her. Then, he touched her forehead and she became a little ball of light. "I'll make sure of it."

The rest of the Wens followed after, becoming fireflies that floated into the air and into the bright moonlight.

"Now then," Wei Wuxian said, turning towards the borders of the Burial Mounds where the fierce corpses that he once used to protect the Wens were still roaming.

"Time to finish things off."

*

*

End Chapter One

Chapter End Notes

Edited 21/3/22:

I have no idea why but the translation for Wei Ying's title disappeared.

Fuxing Zushi 复兴祖师: Venerable Patriarch of Renewal. 复兴 Fuxing means revival, renaissance, renewal, reconstruction, rebirth, resurrection. and 祖师 Zushi is honored patriarch. Fuxing is also homophone to Rich Star though the characters are different 富星.

Accepting Due

Chapter Summary

Wei Wuxian finds out what is his punishment for his past crimes and gets to choose an adjutant.

Chapter Notes

There's a shift between then (when WWX first ascended) and now (when WWX returns to the mortal world in Chapter 1) that will be happening for a few chapters.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

It took him a while to figure out how to change the settings in his dark realm. The narrow pier he woke up on turned into the broad pier truly reminiscent of the ones in Lotus Pier. Lotuses and water lilies of all colours started popping out of the empty, dark, deep water and to make things more comfortable for himself, he made a large floating pavilion with lotus lanterns drifting around it.

It proved to be a good move because as soon as he was about to settle down to sit in his pavilion, he received some visitors. He saluted immediately, even though he didn't know their names. They were clearly senior ranking officials, dressed in black embellished with silver and gold embroidery. It was reminiscent of his own black robes, except his was embellished with red embroidery of lotuses, stars and butterflies(1) at the hem.

"Greetings, my Lords," he said, unsure of what to call them.

"Fuxing Zushi," greeted the one with a dark complexion. He had a large, imposing figure and the charisma of someone calm, wise and trustworthy. On his forehead was a crescent symbol. "I am Yanluo Wang(2), but you can call me Yama."

Wei Wuxian blinked in shock. *Yanluo Wang!?*

"And I am Ling Wen(3)," said the other. She was sporting prominent eye bags and was carrying a truly hefty amount of documents. "I am the Goddess of Civil Matters."

"Uh. Please to meet both of you," Wei Ying bowed low, head still reeling at being in the presence of two senior gods. "Please call me Wei Wuxian."

"Very well," Yanluo Wang agreed, smoothing his beard.

"Please have a seat," Wei Ying offered, gesturing to the pavilion. Which fortunately had a fresh pot of tea and some tidbits that he had been thinking of enjoying.

"Thank you," Ling Wen said, walking briskly to the table while balancing the scrolls and documents. She maneuvered them all onto the round table and sat down as the other two black-clad gods slowly walked to the pavilion.

"You should have a little more light," Yanluo Wang commented, pointing to the midnight sky.

"Erm," Wei Ying floundered, unsure how to turn the night sky into daylight. Is it even possible? "Should I make more lanterns?"

"No. You can do it like this," Yanluo Wang said. And a glowing moon started appearing from the horizon, rising quickly into the sky. It was so round and bright that it lit up the pavilion and the pier.

"Oh," Wei Ying said, staring at the luminescent disk.

"Just because our realms are in the dark doesn't mean that we need to walk around blindly," Yanluo Wang commented. His bushy beard twitched and Wei Ying had the impression that the senior God of the Underworld was laughing at him.

"Thank you, sir," he said, nodding his head in understanding.

"It'll also make your paperwork easier," Ling Wen said, patting the mountain of folders.

"Paperwork?" he squeaked in apprehension. Was it too late for him to jump into the water and swim away? Wait. Wasn't he the God of Renewal? What paperwork could he possibly have?

"Ah, unfortunately, there was an influx of souls due to a certain war," Yanluo Wang replied wryly. "The Ten Kings of the Underworld think that it is only right that you should take some of our workload since you contributed to most of them."

Wei Wuxian stared at the larger god in disbelief.

"What!?"

It didn't take him long to realise that this was punishment for him.

Because the paperwork just kept piling up.

Ling Wen returned five times with assistants in tow to bring him more cases to work on.

"Usually Zhuanlun Wang(4) is the one in charge of reincarnations but since he is already overburdened by the rebirths of the occupants of Diyu (5), I think it's only fitting for you to see to those that have already been approved for reincarnation," Yanluo Wang said, watching with amusement as the assistants walk pass, dragging bags of scrolls.

"But I'm new..." Wei Ying ended that with a whining tone as he watched his beautiful pavilion become stacked with documents of all kinds. Can he kick them into the water and act like it was an accident? He shot a look at the very grim-looking Ling Wen and decided that he could not afford to be suicidal a second time.

"That's why we are giving you the ones that are the easiest," Yanluo Wang said. "Read through their history, their suffering and their greatest achievements. Then weight if they deserve to be reincarnated into a better life or one that will balance their karma in the next life."

"What if I do it wrongly?" Wei Ying asked, fingers trembling. Everyone knew that he made questionable judgements. Look at the Wens. He thought he was doing the right thing when he saved them. Doing right by them, when he had, in fact, prolonged their suffering by bringing them to the Burial Mounds.

"Then you make amends," Ling Wen answered for King Yama. "You make a mistake, then repent and make it right."

"That's right," Yanluo Wang said, brushing his beard with his hand. The motion reminded Wei Ying of Lan-xiansheng. Inevitably, that thought made him think of Lan Zhan and he was hit by the feeling of missing him so much that he nearly teared up.

It made him wonder how everyone was. Jiang Cheng. Lan Zhan. And... And..

"Yanluo Wang," he called out to the senior official. "May I ask if there is anyone called Wen Yuan in there?"

Ling Wen and Yanluo Wang exchanged looks.

"Ah, I believe that boy is still alive," Yanluo Wang said, looking up to recall his recent list of the dead. He had a fairly good memory but even he hit the limit during the Sunshot Campaign. He and the other Kings of Hell was quite happy to welcome someone new to help with the burden of the dead, even if Wei Wuxian wasn't exactly one of them.

Ling Wen nodded. "As far as I know, his file is not here."

Wei Ying sighed a breath of relief. A-Yuan was alive! But then, who rescued him?

Before he could ask more questions, Yanluo Wang said, "If you want to visit the mortal world, you must learn to control your powers first."

"And do at least half of these paperwork first. You need to reduce as much backlog as possible," Ling Wen continued. "See if you can get an assistant of sort."

"Assistant..." Wei Ying parroted. "Will a soul do?"

"Depending," Ling Wen answered cautiously. "Who do you have in mind?"

"The Wen siblings."

Doing things alone was a pain in the ass, that was for sure.

Ling Wen had to file paperwork to request Wen Qing's soul as an assistant before Yanluo Wang can even remove her soul from Diyu, where she awaited her judgement and possible reincarnation. Apparently, it was easier to get reincarnated than to become the assistant to a god. Damn bureaucracy.

He spent hours pouring on the oldest files. The 'backlog' from the war, the first casualties from the Sunshot Campaign. A lot of them were the victims of the Wens soldiers and some of them were even Wens themselves. Some were part of the main family that protested against Wen Ruohan's actions towards the other sects before the war started. In a way, they were the easiest to get through because even though they were innocent and shouldn't have had their lives cut short because of the cruelty of one man, they didn't die by his hand. Once he reached the victims of the war that died of fierce corpses though, that's when everything started spiraling for him.

Instead of just Wen Dogs and the opposition, reading about their lives and their families made them real humans to Wei Wuxian. These were people too. They had loved ones too. They were just people who had the misfortune of being born under the rule of a psychopathic power-hungry man.

At the beginning of his ordeal, he had wished for wine to help him cope with the dreariness of reading file after file and watching the lives of the individuals pass by on the surface of still water in front of his pavilion. Now, he wished for wine to help him get through the files without the guilt weighing down on him. He might have been a little more lenient with his judgements on some of them than he should have during those times, but he's pretty sure that they deserve it, considering they had the misfortune of meeting him on the battlefield back then.

Still, being alone in a dark, empty place with no one to communicate with (except during the occasional visits from one of the Kings or Ling Wen) was not conducive for his mental health as he tried to drown himself one time by sticking his head into the viewing pond.

Unfortunately, he was a god that couldn't possibly die from such a measly method, in his own realm no less. So, as he was screaming into the void that was the bottomless pond, someone grabbed the back of his robes and pulled him out.

"You idiot, what are you doing!?" a familiar voice shouted at him.

"Wen Qing?" he said, throat hoarse from his scream-crying.

"Who else!?" Wen Qing snarked. "You asked for me to come help you, right?"

Wei Wuxian nodded, tears still streaming down his cheeks. Seeing that, Wen Qing sighed and sat beside him on the pier.

"You idiot. Torturing yourself needlessly," Wen Qing said.

"Where's Wen Ning?" Wei Ying asked, scrubbing the tears away. Seeing that, Wen Qing sighed in annoyance. Dressed in luxurious, noble robes and looking exponentially healthy than he had ever been, Wei Wuxian would have looked very well-fitted with the other gods. But even with all these riches, her friend, whom she considered as close as a brother, still didn't carry any handkerchief and still ugly cried horrendously.

"Last I knew, he's in Koi Tower," Wen Qing answered. "They kept him locked up and burned me."

"I'll- I'll go get him," Wei Ying said, "I'll do it now-"

"Wei Wuxian," Wen Qing said, firmly. "You are no longer Yiling Laozu. You are now the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal. Don't simply shirk off your responsibilities to go about to become a hero!"

"But Wen Ning...!"

"Lord Ling Wen said that you are not to leave until you have lessened at least half the backlog," Wen Qing said firmly. "I know you don't like to follow the rules but you are new here and there are a lot of gods here we cannot afford to offend simply because we want to rescue my brother."

"Furthermore, what can they do to him? He's already dead," she continued. When Wei Wuxian opened his mouth to answer her, she interrupted him. "If they destroy him, he will just come to the afterlife."

When Wei Wuxian's livid expression did not abate, she continued.

"Think of it this way, your nephew might be there," she said. "If you do anything to LanlingJin, it may affect him too."

The mention of Jin Ling got him to quell his murderous intent. He never got to see his nephew before he died and that devastated him more than even his own death.

"Then, what should I do?" he asked, slumping down even more.

"For now, do your work. Learn to use your magic and watch over your nephew, A-Yuan and A-Ning," Wen Qing said. "And when the time comes, we will have a plan in mind to execute."

Looking into her determined eyes, Wei Wuxian found himself nodding, feeling much less uncertain of his role. Instead of drifting like an unmoored boat, he now had a clearer vision of what he should do.

He wasn't alone now.

At present time, Koi Tower was (mostly) asleep. There were cultivators patrolling around but Wei Wuxian walked past them with no care. They couldn't see him, and it's not like they could stop him even if they could see him.

It had taken him a while to find out the location of Wen Ning, as it took a little longer than he would have liked to master the extent of his powers and abilities. It really was fortunate that he had Wen Qing, who took up the bulk of his paperwork. Most days, the only thing he needed to do was give his stamp of approval. (Of course, she would only let him get away with it if he was busy with testing the boundaries of his powers, answering prayers from afar, learning new skills from the other Gods or inventing new spells. If she ever caught him lazing around, she would give him a talking to so bad that he would try to drown himself in the water just to get away from her nagging. Once or twice, she even helped him go for a swim by kicking/throwing him into the water.)

With purpose, the God of Renewal continued to stride through the halls of Koi Tower, even going so far as walking past Jin Guangyao. His fingers twitched but he held himself back.

Soon.

Soon, this little snake will have his due. Him and his father.

Everything was already laid out for them and they WOULD lie in the beds that they both made.

And to make sure that their stay was comfortable, he'd arrange for them to share a personal torture room in Diyu.

He walked through the hidden doorway that led to the secret workshop where they hid two very important people. Where they were experimenting with dark cultivation (or demonic cultivation according to the self-righteous cultivation sects) with his ill-gotten notes.

"Xue Yang," Wei Wuxian whispered, spotting the young man who was gleefully sticking long nails into a poor corpse's head. "You little bastard."

He'd been watching this little shit for sometime now, especially since he joined the Jin sect (that was already in Wei Wuxian's shit list for the load of crimes that they had accumulated). After Xue Yang attacked Baixue Temple, killed the disciples and blinded his Shishu's soulmate, Wei Wuxian was determined to return the favour.

Wei Ying reached out to touch the forehead of the corpse that Xue Yang was playing with and the fierce corpse immediately slumped, the spirit within dissipating into the afterlife.

"What!? What the hell!?" Xue Yang shouted, incensed, thinking that he had accidentally gone too far. "It was only two nails!"

Wei Wuxian left him to rant and smash things in his anger. The little turd would get his own due soon enough.

He got to a table where a large man laid and inspected the man. Fortunately, he was still alive and though his wounds were severe, it was nothing that Wei Ying couldn't regenerate.

Then, he turned around and walked into the wall that separated the room to the prison where his old friend was held.

"Wen Ning," he called out.

No answer.

"A-Ning," he tried again, going closer to the fierce corpse. When there was still no answer, he inspected the unresponsive fierce corpse and found two long nails stuck into his friend's head. He pulled them out as gently as he could but it was obviously causing suffering to Wen Ning, who roared vociferously. Wei Wuxian could hear clanging as Xue Yang made his way into the prison but he ignored it in favour of inspecting the crudely made nails.

"A-Ning, it's time to go," he told the fierce corpse that had slumped down, the chains being the only things holding him up.

"A-Ning, get up," Wei Wuxian coaxed, making a slashing motion. The thick chains keeping the fierce corpse in check snapped and Wen Ning slumped forwards for a moment before his eyes snapped open, immediately zoning in on Xue Yang, who had just stepped into the prison.

"What the fuck!" the youth cursed, backtracking to close the door.

"Wen Ning," Wei Wuxian whispered into the fierce corpse's ear. "Take his eyes."

Wen Ning roared as he jumped on the demonic cultivator.

Wen Ning's awareness returned in slow increments.

"A-Ning, welcome back," purred a familiar voice.

He blinked up at the impishly smiling face of Wei Wuxian.

"Wei-gongzi?" he croaked. What happened? Weren't he and his sister at Koi Tower? Did Wei-gongzi come to rescue them? Wait... didn't Jin Guangshan announce that they were going to burn his sister!?

He sat up quickly, head nearly colliding with Wei Wuxian's.

"A-Jie!" Wen Ning exclaimed. "A-jie! Wei-gongzi! They said they were going to burn her!"

"A-Ning," Wei Wuxian said calmly, but sadly. "Your sister, she is dead."

"No..." Wen Ning whimpered. It was a terrible feeling, to be able to feel sad but be unable to cry.

"It's alright, Wen Ning," Wei Wuxian continued. "She's safe now in the afterlife."

Wen Ning blinked at him in confusion.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Well, it's a long story," Wei Wuxian said, taking a seat beside him on his bed, which was inexplicably a flower bed.

Wen Ning looked around, confused as to where he was. It looked familiar but it was filled with flowers and foliage of all kinds. Was that a radish patch over there?

"Wei-gongzi, where are we?" Wen Ning asked before Wei Ying could start his story.

"Why, we're in Burial Mounds, of course," Wei Wuxian answered with a wide, smug smile.

"What!?"

"So my sister is now your adjutant?"

"That's right," Wei Wuxian confirmed with a nod.

"And she still haven't attempted to kill you for shirking your duty?"

"Well, she did try but I'm a god now, so not that easy to kill," Wei Wuxian said, with a shrug. "Also, hey!"

Wen Ning gave him a stiff smile. He looked much more happier and at ease knowing that his sister and family were safe now.

"So, now, the most important issue at hand for you," Wei Wuxian started, turning serious. "I can let you join them in the afterlife, but there are a lot of things still unsettled here in the

mortal world. So will you help me first before you join your family?"

"Of course, Wei-gon- I mean, Lord Wei," Wen Ning answered.

"Please don't call me that," Wei Wuxian said with a cringe. "When your sister does that in front of the other gods, it gives me goosebumps."

Wen Ning smiled stiffly again.

"Alright, I have a mission for you," Wei Wuxian said, moving on to another topic.

"What is it, Lord Wei?"

"Don't call me that," Wei Wuxian answered absentmindedly. Then, he pointed to large figure lying on the flower bed behind Wen Ning.

"I want you to help me to take care of Nie Mingjue."

*

*

End Chapter 2

Chapter End Notes

(1) all the symbols of rebirth.

(2) Yanluo Wang or Yamla (Chinese: 閻羅王; pinyin: Yánluó Wáng) is a deity in Chinese religion and Taoism, and one of official judge in Youdu, the underworld.

(3) Ling Wen is a Civil God from Heaven Officials Blessing. She is well-known for being peerlessly competent and effective in her work. WWX calls her 'Lord' out of respect for her seniority (and also because he's terrified of her)

(4) Zhuanlun Wang is the 10th King of Hell, the one in charge of all the reincarnations. The last level boss, so to speak. (He's v happy to have WWX join the ranking coz then he could shove work on the poor newbie) lol

(5) Diyu is the realm of the dead or "hell" in Chinese mythology. There are 18 levels of this!!!! JGS is gonna have a loooonnnngggg visit here.

So, who expected Wen Qing to be his first adjutant aka right-hand (wo)man?

Ling Wen and she gets along very well. lol. In fact, Wei Wuxian is more terrified at the both of them that he is scared of the Ten Kings of Hell.

P.S. there's a part two to this little visit to Koi Tower, which features XY's ultimate end.

Making Amends

Chapter Notes

This chapter is set when Wei Ying is still new in his ascension. He's going through his own punishment when he realised that Madam Yu and Jiang Fengmian is still in the underworld. No snippets of current timeline until the next chapter.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

One, or rather, two of the hardest files for him to open was that of Jiang Fengmian and Yu Ziyuan.

By right, because of his association with them, he was not supposed to process them for reincarnation since Zhuanlun Wang was concerned that he could not be unbiased. But he'd begged the Tenth King of Hell for permission to at least meet them before the couple was sent off. It took a lot of wheedling and downright tears before the exasperated senior relented.

The King warned him that there were lots of things in their lives that were unresolved and regrets that had to be addressed before he was allowed to see them, so he handed Wei Ying the files and told him to reflect long and hard on what he wanted to say as this was his last chance to see them as they were.

And so, Wei Wuxian, now titled Fuxing Zushi, sat down and opened the two files, watching as the mirror pond showed him the lives of the two people who were essentially his foster parents...

Jiang Fengmian was the only child of two people who were clearly in an arranged marriage. They were good co-leaders of Yunmeng and stern parents, but they didn't touch each other and barely even looked at each other. Their affection for the young boy only went so far as nods and he was brought up mostly by caretakers. They were so distant from him that they may as well be strangers.

It was, sadly, quite reminiscent of how his foster parents were with each other, except worse. At least Jiang Fengmian praised them when they managed a breakthrough and pat their heads while Yu Ziyuan would make sure that the chefs made their favourite dishes, even when she vehemently denied it.

Jiang Fengmian's parents said that he was too soft, too amiable to be a sect leader, so he tried to develop a more assertive behaviour, especially among his peers. But despite how hard he worked, it never seemed to satisfy his parents. It was never enough and he was

always considered a disappointment despite the fact that he was well-liked amongst his peers.

He watched as Jiang Fengmian, now a teenager, met his mother and fell in love with her vivaciousness and cleverness. She was very much like Wei Ying, fearless and brilliant, burning brighter than any other he had ever met. It really was not surprising that Jiang Fengmian wasn't the only one who fell in love with her.

When she rebuffed his affections for his best friend, Wei Ying watched as the young sect leader gracefully accepted his defeat and blessed their marriage with happiness laced with wistfulness. But contrary to what Wei Ying had dreaded to see, it wasn't just Cangse Sanren that he stared after as they left Lotus Pier. There was a deep longing etched on his face as he watched the happy couple leave him behind.

It was clear that Jiang Fengmian wanted what they had, a loving relationship between two people.

And then, he met a beautiful and equally amazing young woman with a sharp tongue that hid a vulnerable heart. She was very much different from Cangse Sanren, who was kind and playful while she was sardonic and strict. But she was just as clever and determined.

And he was in love with her.

He'd always been in love with her.

Wei Ying wondered how he and all the others had been so blind as not to see the love that was reflected in Jiang Fengmian's eyes whenever he looked at his wife.

Every time she spoke, his attention would be on her and no one else.

But he didn't know how to show her that she really was his first choice, not someone he had 'settled' for and certainly not because Meishan Yu 'pressured' him into marrying her. He began to look resigned whenever she didn't believe him when he told her that he loved her and she took it as a sign that he was getting sick of her cynicism. As a sign that he was getting tired of her.

Then they had an argument and he accidentally broke her hairpin. He'd been out fixing the hairpin he broke the night the Wens attacked Lotus Pier.

He'd been too late to return.

He'd been too late to tell her how much he cherished her.

And too late to tell her that she was the only one in his heart. Had been ever since he first saw her wield Zidian against the Boar Demon.

The last thing he ever saw was her beloved face as she cried out to him, once again a disappointment to his loved one...

Wei Ying sniffled as wiped his tears off. Then, he shuffled Yu Ziyuan's folder forward and opened it...

On the surface of the pool, reflected Yu Ziyuan's birth. She was born the third daughter to the Meishan Matriarch. She was talented, strong and beautiful. More so than her two elder sisters. And everyone knew it too. This sparked a competitiveness among the three sisters that should have been healthy but turned jealous and ugly as they grew older and men started paying more attention to Yu Ziyuan.

But Yu Ziyuan only had eyes for one man. The man that became YunmengJiang's sect leader at the young age of 19 and was hailed as one of the most eligible bachelors in the cultivation world.

"Just give up. Jiang Fengmian is in love with Cangse Sanren," her sister said venomously, having caught her staring after the handsome young sect leader. "Everyone knows that."

The brainworm made it's way into her mind and stayed, repeating itself over and over in her head even when Jiang Fengmian started paying her attention and started courting her with expensive gifts and flattering words.

When Jiang Fengmian sent a marriage proposal to her family, Yu Ziyuan was elated but at the same time, unhappy.

He's settling for me, she told herself. I am only the second choice because he can't have HER.

Still, HE was her best option. She couldn't stay in Meishan, to be governed by her increasingly hostile older sisters. Her other marriage prospects weren't as good as Jiang Fengmian.

And the truth was, she truly wanted to be with him.

Even if he didn't really want her.

On their wedding day, her groom was so very handsome, so kind and so very gentle with her. Her sisters had told her that her first time would hurt, though how they knew that when they were both unmarried was a mystery to her.

She was happy. For a while. Even more so when she got pregnant and gave birth to a girl. Her little girl was born early and was in poor health, so for a while, neither her nor Fengmian knew if she would survive. Then, Fengmian named her Yanli, saying that he couldn't bear to part with her.

Miraculously, little Jiang Yanli survived, and though she wouldn't be able to cultivate to a full core, Yu Ziyuan was still grateful to the heavens for sparing her firstborn.

Then she got pregnant again a year later and her joy returned. All the insecurity of having not given her husband a strong male heir was finally wiped away. She relished in her

pregnancy and the way Fengmian doted on their toddler daughter.

But the poisonous words in her mind continued eating at her. And when Cangse Sanren and Wei Changze came back to Lotus Pier to visit one day, equally pregnant and happy, the little parasite in her mind became a raging monster that latched onto her heart relentlessly.

Suddenly, Yanli's name carried a different meaning.

Was he thinking of HER when he named her? Did he wish his daughter was born from that woman? How dare he?! How could he!?

Then, SHE gave birth to her healthy first born with beautiful grey eyes and a ready smile. And Yu Ziyuan, stressed from all the malicious thoughts swirling in her head, gave birth 5 days later to a perfect little boy who was still too small.

Once again, she was second.

She wept over her son when her husband finally arrived, having missed the birth while on an urgent night hunt. He fretted over her, desperately asking the midwives about both mother and son's health. Not for a second did Jiang Fengmian thought of Cangse Sanren or her newborn, but Yu Ziyuan, so deep in the darkness of her own mind, did not notice at all.

Despite all his attentiveness to her and her son, every time he looked at the other woman felt like a dagger to her heart, and even after that woman left with her husband, Yu Ziyuan couldn't stop the green-eyed monster from festering. Every word that came out of her mouth became vitriol and she constantly reminded him and herself that she was nothing but a second choice.

Her heart became an ugly, shriveled thing that longed for something she could never have. Or so she thought.

Then, that woman died and Jiang Fengmian became obsessed with looking for her son. So much so that he neglected his own son and daughter. After he found the boy, he took that child home and gave him everything that he should have given to Ah-Cheng. His attention, his praise, his love.

It was terrible of her to be jealous of a poor orphaned child but she couldn't help but feel bitter at being reminded every time she saw him that she would always be her husband's second choice and now, her child too was being treated the same way.

She became even more harsh, especially to that woman's child.

(There were moments though, that Wei Ying remembered and was reminded by the flashes in the viewing pond, moments of softness that Yu Ziyuan shared with him when no one was in sight. A gentle pat on the head when he cried from missing his parents. Sweets she gave to him and told him to share with Jiang Cheng. How she would tell the chef to cook his favourite dish and claimed that she felt like eating it that day. She wasn't always so hard on him like most people thought. Perhaps, the person she was hardest on was herself because she thought she could never measure up to a dead woman.)

It was at her dying moments, when she watched the light in Jiang Fengmian's eyes dimmed away, that she realised that it wasn't HER that he had spent his whole life with. Wasn't HER that he called his wife and had two beautiful, perfect children with. Wasn't HER name that he whispered with his dying breath, eyes never leaving Yu Ziyuan's.

If she could turn back time, she would do everything all over again. Marry the man she loved. Have the life she truly wanted but leave all the hate, jealousy and insecurity behind.

"In our next life, let's be husband and wife again," she whispered to her dead husband, clutching desperately at his limp hand. "And I swear I'll be a better wife to you."

Then the sword came down on her and she knew no more.

It took Wei Ying hours, days (he doesn't know how long) before he could rally himself up to meet them. He'd spent a lot of time crying his eyes out, psyching himself up and then chickening out at the last minute in front of Zhuanlun Wang's door.

Finally, Wen Qing kicked him into the water for teeter-tottering aimlessly, unproductively and cowardly.

"Just get it over with!" she reprimanded him. "Putting yourself and them on hold for so long is not going to help anyone."

The truth was, he was ashamed. He had promised that he would take care of Jiang Cheng and Shijie but he had failed. Badly. He didn't even know how to face them with how badly he fucked up.

But Wen Qing was right. Putting it off any further was just detrimental to everyone.

So he steeled himself, went to Zhuanlun Wang and finally obtained permission to summon his foster parents' souls for a last sent off.

The moment they appeared before him, Wei Ying fell to his knees and kowtowed.

"Jiang-shushu, Yu-furen. Wei Ying has failed you!" he said.

"You silly child. You're a God. You shouldn't bow to anyone anymore."

Unexpectedly, it wasn't Jiang Fengmian who spoke up first. Though the hands that pulled him up was definitely the ex-sect leader's.

"Stand up straight. Lift your chin up. Your posture is horrendous!" Yu Ziyuan said, tone strict but devoid of any vitriol. "You are a god. Be proud of yourself."

"That's right, A-Xian," said Jiang Fengmian with a pat on his shoulder and back. "You have achieved greatness."

"I've achieved nothing!" Wei Ying denied. "I caused so much trouble for everyone. And so many people died because of me."

"Don't be foolish," Yu Ziyuan said just as Jiang Fengmian interrupted by saying, "Many more were saved because of you."

"But the Wens came to Lotus Pier because of me," Wei Ying countered.

"Don't be presumptuous," Yu Ziyuan snapped in annoyance. "Those vermin would have come anyway because that Wen Ruohan would use any excuse to subjugate us. You were just a convenient scapegoat."

"But you said-" he started but was interrupted.

"I know what I said," Yu Ziyuan said. "And it wasn't true. I was bitter and vile because *I* wanted a scapegoat too."

Wei Ying paused, taken aback by the admittance.

Yu Ziyuan sighed, looking exasperated, perhaps at both herself and Wei Ying.

"I was terrible to you," she admitted. "It was never your fault that you were born to Cangse Sanren. And neither was it her fault that I was petty, jealous and faulty."

"San-niang, you're not faulty," Jiang Fengmian objected, gentle as always.

"But I'm petty and jealous," Yu Ziyuan said, picking out what he didn't say.

"And I love you the way you are," Jiang Fengmian countered smoothly.

Both Wei Ying and Yu Ziyuan blushed horrendously at that.

Shameless. Too shameless, Jiang-shushu!

Clearly, something had changed between the two of them. Had they managed to talk it over during their confinement under Zhuanlun Wang's custody? It certainly looked like they managed to clear the air between them.

"Regardless," Yu Ziyuan said, waving a hand as if to shoo away her husband's embarrassing words. "Don't blame yourself for the actions of others. If you keep beating yourself up because of other people, then you will never get anything done."

"But A-Cheng lost his core and Shijie died because of me," he said, shame colouring his face. "If I didn't lose control-"

"It was A-Li's choice to go after you," Yu Ziyuan snapped. "Just like it was my choice to send the both of you out of Lotus Pier that night."

Wei Wuxian just gaped at her, speechless as the words registered in his mind.

"If you don't believe me, you can ask her," Yu Ziyuan said, lips thinning in annoyance. "Also, Zhuanlun Wang already showed us what happened with A-Cheng. If he didn't distract the Wens from you, you would have been the one to lose your core. Your trajectory would have been the same."

"What?" Wei Ying said, eyes wide. He didn't know that!

"A-Xian," Jiang Fengmian interrupted Wei Ying's spiraling thoughts gently. "A-Cheng lost his golden core because he was captured while leading the Wens away from you. But you gave your core to him for the same reason that he did it."

The second sentence didn't seem to penetrate his mind as the thought circled his mind over and over again.

Jiang Cheng got caught because of me. Jiang Cheng lost his core because of me.

"But why? Why would he do that!?" Wei Ying asked in clear devastation.

"Because he did it out of love for you, you idiot!" Yu Ziyuan answered. "His brother was about to be captured, of course he was going to do what he can. I didn't raise a coward or a traitor."

"But I- he- he shouldn't have!" Wei Ying said. "He's the Jiang heir. YunmengJiang depended on him! I'm just-"

"Don't you dare continue that sentence," Yu Ziyuan interrupted. "Did you not hear what I said? He did it out of love for you. The same reason you endured the pain of giving your core away to him."

Wei Ying sobbed, throwing his hands on his face as he collapsed.

"A-Xian," Jiang-shushu said gently, kneeling beside him and wrapping his arms around him. "Anyone of us would have done the same for you."

"That's right," Yu Ziyuan said, turning away so none of them could see her blinking away her own tears. "And don't say you did it because you owe us!"

"But I do owe you, for taking me in," Wei Ying whispered tearily.

"Oh A-Xian," Jiang Fengmian said. "You owe us nothing for taking you in after your parents passed away."

"Because it is the right thing to do," Yu Ziyuan said. Then she amended. "Even if I did a terrible job of it."

"You didn't," Jiang Fengmian said, then paused. "Maybe a little."

"Jiang Fengmian!"

Wei Ying laughed wetly, the nostalgia sweeping over him. He will never hear this again. Their voices, their bickering, their scolding and their assurances. For all their faults, they were his parental figures that he grew up with.

Wei Ying slowly stood up and blinked away the tears, or at least he tried. When he failed, he wiped away the tears with his sleeves, making Yu Ziyuan tsk at him.

"You're not a child anymore," she berated him, pulling out her handkerchief to roughly scrub his face. "Carry a handkerchief and don't cry so much. People won't take you seriously if they see you like this."

"Jiang Cheng ugly cries too," Wei Ying said defensively with a pout.

"Both of you are the same," she snapped, lighter than she would have been when she was alive. "I hope that boy carries his handkerchief, at least."

"He does," he replied automatically, stemmed from his perpetual desire to shield Jiang Cheng from any punishment.

"San-niang," said Jiang Fengmian gently, the way he always does. Except now, his tone reflected more affection than he had ever dared to show.

"Right," Yu Ziyuan said. "Zhuanlun Wang explained that we have to move on soon."

Wei Ying nodded solemnly. "Everything has been cleared, paperwork wise."

"Good. Then we won't have to wait so long. You will be sending us to Naihe Bridge(1)?" Yu Ziyuan asked, sliding her handkerchief into his hand.

Wei Ying tightened his fist around the soft cloth and nodded again, gesturing to the pier in his dark world. More length started materialising at the end of the pier, the wooden boards connecting to a stone path, then to the stone bridge that led to a glowing light. Beside the mouth of the bridge, an old woman stood on the stone path with her pot of soup.

"That's the end of the road," Jiang Fengmian commented lightly, accepting that this would be the last time he would see his adopted child and the woman he loved.

"You'll continue to keep an eye on your brother, won't you?" Yu Ziyuan said to Wei Ying. She had never called him that before. Never referred to him and Jiang Cheng as brothers.

"I will," he promises. "Even if he never forgives me."

"He will," Yu Ziyuan said with confidence. "He always does even when you do the stupidest things."

Wei Ying laughed sheepishly at that. Because it was true, but him losing control was probably on another level of stupid.

"There's nothing to forgive, A-Xian," Jiang Fengmian smiled gently. "You did your best. Did what you could."

"Yes, and if it wasn't because of that Jin Guangshan, none of you would have ended like this," Yu Ziyuan said viciously. Then she turned to Wei Ying, "Make sure that asshole suffers for his sins."

"And that Jin Guangyao too," Jiang Fengmian said, scowling quite unhappily, which was very uncharacteristic of him.

It made Wei Ying wonder what he had missed. He knew that Jiang Fengmian and Yu Ziyuan were given the privilege of watching what happened between their children in Zhuanlun Wang's looking mirror as a favour to Wei Ying, but he didn't know what they had witnessed.

He made a mental note to look through the Jin Sect's wrongdoings after he looked through his Shijie and Jin Zixuan's files later.

"I promise I'll take a look at it before I send Shijie and Jin Zixuan off," he said. "Then I'll see what I can arrange."

Jiang Fengmian nodded, putting a hand on Wei Ying's shoulder.

"We're proud of you, A-Xian," he said, "You and A-Cheng. You've both grown up so splendidly despite our terrible parenting."

Not knowing what to say, Wei Ying sniffled and nodded.

"And you make sure you take care of yourself," Yu Ziyuan said with a little snark that was more characteristic of her than gentleness. "You look like a stick. Make sure you eat double helpings or people might think we starved you when we were still alive."

"Yes, Yu-furen," he said, somewhat fondly.

Then, he solemnly walked them towards Naihe Bridge.

When they arrived at the foot of the bridge, they each received a bowl of soup from Meng Po(2). Without saying a word, they crossed their arms like they were drinking their wedding wine and tipped the contents of their bowls into their mouth.

"I'll see you on the other side, San-niang," Jiang Fengmian promised.

Yu Ziyuan nodded, even though she knew it might not be the case.

Together, hand-in-hand, the two crossed the Bridge of Forgetfulness, into their next life.

"What about Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan?" Wen Qing asked him after he had sent his foster parents off to their new lives. "Their files are still on the table, waiting to be processed."

He looked at her, looking wrung out from the emotional rollercoaster he had just gone through.

"I suppose it depends on whether they want to move on or do paperwork with you...?" he said. "You need extra hands, don't you?"

Wen Qing gave him an annoyed look.

"What I need is for you to pull your weight!" she said vehemently, pulling on his ear as she dragged him towards his office pavilion.

He yelped and tried to wriggle away but to no avail.

"Qing-jie, merccyyyyyy..."

*

*

Fin Chapter 3

Chapter End Notes

(1) Naihe Bridge (奈何桥), or Hopeless Bridge, the Bridge of Irreparability, known as Naihe qiao in Chinese, also called Bridge over River Nai, is the entrance and exit to the underworld in Taoism and Chinese folk beliefs. Ghosts must pass over this bridge before they can be reincarnated.

(2) 'Old Lady Meng' or Meng Po is the goddess of forgetfulness in Chinese mythology, who serves soup on the Bridge of Forgetfulness or Naihe Bridge. This soup wipes the memory of the person so they can reincarnate into the next life without the burdens of the previous life.

I know a lot of people are going to complain about the lack of LWJ in these chapters but this is Wei Ying's redemption arc. He has to make amends with his dead family first before he can be in a better head space to make things better for everyone else in the mortal world.

YZY was a terrible person to take her jealousy out on a child, but based on some flashbacks of better times in their childhood in the Untamed, she wasn't always like that. There were times that she could be happy / kind too. None of it excused her behaviour and she did suffer through her own punishments in Diyu before her reincarnation, so she

had time to reflect on her mistakes and come to terms with her own flaws before it was time for her reincarnation. As for Jiang Fengmian, he too had time to reflect on the things he should have done (i.e. step in when YZY went too far) and/or should have said.

Yes, it all wrapped up too nicely and seemed too ideal but I'd like to think that in order for a soul to move on properly and without regrets, everything ideally has to be resolved. Zhuanlun Wang knows that in order for Wei Ying to come to terms with his own status / responsibilities now, he would have to settle everything with his old life before he too can move on. He has to look out for his junior too. (Even if he does shove work on him aka bully him) lol.

Watching Over You

Chapter Summary

Jiang Cheng misses his brother, who visits him more often than he knows.

Chapter Notes

This chapter has been expanded and changed significantly compared to the one in the November Prompts so be prepared for changes in LWJ's chapter as well.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

"Have you answered any prayers yet?" Xie Lian asked one day when he came to visit the newest member in their ranks.

Wei Ying, who was barely visible behind all the files, popped his head out and looked at him in bewilderment.

"What?" the young god uttered, looking dazed and completely overworked. Beside him, his assistant looked annoyed at the interruption. Wei Ying had been on a roll clearing as many backlog as he could before his attention span was broken.

"What prayers?" Wei Ying asked in confusion. "I don't have any worshippers right? Why would there be any prayers?"

"And Ling Wen said I couldn't leave until I finish half of the backlog and learn to control my powers," Wei Ying continued with a whine, slumping down on his table, much to the displeasure of his assistant as he managed to mess up some of the files on his table.

"You may not have an official temple yet but people have already started using paintings of you to protect their doors, the barrier of their homes," Xie Lian informed him. "I saw it when I visited the mortal world this morning. That's a form of belief as well."

"Okay," Wei Ying said slowly, nodding in understanding. "But I don't see how I can do anything if I can't leave."

"Well, you don't have to physically leave your realm to answer prayers," Xie Lian said, thinking to himself. "The other Kings of the Dark Realms have a degree of control over dreams and shadowmancy. Maybe you can ask one of them to teach you either one or both."

Wei Ying jumped up, dismantling a tower of scrolls and exclaimed, "That's a good idea! I'll do that now!"

"Wei Wuxian! Don't you dare-!" Wen Qing shouted as Wei Ying ran onto the pier and jumped into the air where he floated away into the moonlight. "You coward!"

Xie Lian laughed awkwardly as he edged away from the fuming assistant.

Perhaps he came at the wrong time.

The first time it happened, Jiang Cheng didn't react much to it.

He just sat on the pier quietly, watching as his sister carried Jin Ling in her arms while his brother and Jin Zixuan cooed at the baby.

The scene was dreamlike and hazy.

It was dark and the big, round moon was shining brightly behind the pavilion that his family was sitting in, happily laughing as they played with the giggling toddler.

It was perfect. Everything he had ever dreamt off. Well, except for the peacock that took his sister away.

But his sister was here with her beautiful, beloved son and his brother was alive, happy and well. And it was all that he had ever wished for.

"Jiang Cheng!" Wei Wuxian called out, beckoning to him. "What are you still sitting there for? Come here!"

"Have you been a good boy for Jiujiu?" Jiang Yanli cooed at her baby, tickling Jin Ling's chubby cheek.

"He's perfect," Wei Wuxian said, "I'm sure he's a good boy."

"He screams a lot," Jiang Cheng said, not saying that Jin Ling was probably screaming for his mother and father. He didn't want to pop this beautiful dream by bringing up reality.

"Just like you," Wei Wuxian laughed, looking so much younger without the burden of demonic cultivation weighing down on his shoulders.

"He laughs like you," Jiang Cheng answered, tears blurring his vision of his siblings.

"Really? Not like Yanli?" interjected Jin Zixuan, looking a little disappointed.

"Why are you even in my dreams?" asked Jiang Cheng, rubbing the tears from his eyes so he could see his siblings properly. He would never have this again, so he wanted to take it all in before this beautiful dream disappeared.

"A-Cheng, don't be so grumpy," surprisingly, it was Wei Wuxian who spoke up on behalf of the peacock. "Jin Zixuan just wants to see Jin Ling."

This was definitely a dream. There was no way his brother would be so nice as to defend the peacock.

Seeing Jiang Cheng's still dazed look, Wei Wuxian left the group to sit beside him while the happy couple continued to coddle their son.

"A-Cheng ah, you look so tired all the time, has Jin Ling been keeping you up all night?" Wei Wuxian asked, looking concerned at his brother.

Which was rich, in Jiang Cheng's opinion, since HE was the one that was dead.

"You're dead," Jiang Cheng couldn't help but say. "You're dead. And A-Jie is dead. And I'm all alone."

Wei Wuxian looked sad and lifted a hand to gently wipe away the single tear that fell from Jiang Cheng's eye with his thumb.

"You're not alone, Jiang Cheng. I'm here with you," Wei Wuxian said gently, then he pointed at Jiang Cheng's chest, where his golden core sat, burning brightly and warmly like a miniature star.

"I'm always with you."

Jiang Cheng woke up with tears in his eyes and the sounds of a baby cooing in his ears.

A-Ling, who was usually wailing when he woke up in the morning, was in an unusually good mood that morning. When Jiang Cheng finally got out of his bed, he found the baby happily playing with his feet in his cot.

When Jin Ling laid eyes on him, the little boy gave a peal of laughter, happy and completely free, like his brother's laughter once did.

I wish you were here, Jiang Cheng thought to himself, swallowing the lump in his throat as he picked up his nephew.

I wish all of you were here.

The second time it happened, Jiang Cheng was sitting in his favourite pavilion with a cup of wine in his hand.

He loved this pavilion.

His sibling and he always celebrated Mid-Autumn Festival with his parents here, releasing lanterns into the air and water to light up the darkness.

Just three years ago, they celebrated it together under a large, round moon that Wei Wuxian claimed had a rabbit in it. Jiang Cheng had tried to push the loudmouth into the water for his nonsense but it ended in a short tussle that abruptly halted when his mother gave them both a narrow-eyed look.

Now, he was alone, with nothing but the stars glittering in the sky and the sounds of the water splashing against the pier.

He didn't even have the moon to accompany him.

Or, at least, that was what he thought.

The shift was instantaneous.

He had laid his cup down, put his head on his hand and closed his eyes.

When he opened his eyes again, the dark, silent pavilion he was sitting in was lit by the bright moonlight and floating lanterns. His brother was carrying Jin Ling this time, cooing to the baby who should, by all rights, be in Koi Tower right now. His sister and brother-in-law was sitting beside him chatting as they patted fluffy black and white rabbits.

"A-Cheng?" Jiang Yanli called out, looking as beautiful as the day she got married. "You're awake!"

"Haiyo, Jiang Cheng," Wei Wuxian called out as he patted Jin Ling's back gently. "You really shouldn't drink so much if you get drunk so fast."

"Who's drunk!?" Jiang Cheng snapped automatically. "I'm not a lightweight like you!"

Wei Wuxian gasped, offended. "Jiang Cheng! How dare you! I am not a lightweight!"

Jiang Cheng snorted, his lips twitching at the look on the older man's face. Wei Wuxian grumbled to a babbling Jin Ling about ungrateful younger brothers.

"A-Cheng, you look so tired," his sister said, lifting a hand to touch his forehead. Her touch was cool and soothing so he closed his eyes to savour the feeling. "You must make sure to take care of yourself, didi."

"Yeah, or we'll be worried here in the afterlife," Wei Wuxian interjected, shifting his grip to hand Jin Ling to his father, who gladly accepted him.

Jiang Cheng felt a flair of annoyance spark through him at that.

"I wouldn't be so tired if you were here," he snapped at Wei Wuxian. "You promised me that you would be by my side! And yet, you chose those Wen dogs!"

"A-Cheng," Jiang Yanli said gently, regretfully.

"And because of you, A-Jie is dead!" Jiang Cheng shouted, ignoring Jin Zixuan who got up and exited the pavilion with Jin Ling to keep the baby from crying.

"I know," Wei Wuxian said, looking regretful and sad at him. At the same time, Jiang Yanli interjected to say, "It wasn't A-Xian's fault! I chose to be there."

"You wouldn't be there if it wasn't because of him," Jiang Cheng said angrily. "We all wouldn't have been there if it wasn't because of him!"

"And he wouldn't have been there if he wasn't set up," Jiang Yanli countered, looking quite cross, which was unlike her. This and her words made Jiang Cheng pause.

"What do you mean!?" he asked, looking from his sister to his brother.

"It's fine, Jiang Cheng," Wei Wuxian said with a gentle smile. "I'll handle it."

"Like you handled the Wens!?" Jiang Cheng snapped, annoyed. "Stop trying to keep secrets from me! Tell me! Or I can't help you!"

"You can't help me, Jiang Cheng. I'm already dead," Wei Wuxian said, much to the younger man's devastation.

Jiang Cheng didn't know what to say. His lips trembled and he blinked to keep the tears of frustration from falling from his eyes.

"But you're not. So your safety is our priority," Wei Wuxian continued, now closer to the sect leader and touching his face gently. The world around them seemed to fade away as Jiang Cheng focused entirely on his brother.

"Yours and Jin Ling's."

Jiang Cheng woke up in his own room, in his own bed, with the blankets neatly tucked in. Confused, he got up and looked around but found no other signs of any interloper.

He spent the rest of the day in a confused daze as he thought about his dream.

What did his 'dream' sister mean? Was Wei Wuxian set up? Did that mean that he didn't lose control but... what? No, Wei Wuxian obviously lost control. But... he had been pushed to do so, even Jiang Cheng could tell given the attack on the Wen remnants, whom he knew were just the old and feeble and certainly not the dangerous cultivators that Jin Guangshan claimed to be.

Jiang Cheng paused at that thought.

Jin Guangshan.

That man wanted his brother's Stygian Tiger Seal. Had made it known repeatedly that he wanted it and had obviously coveted it for its power.

Did that disgusting, womanizing, old fox plan everything to push his brother to the edge!?

Incensed at the thought, Jiang Cheng wanted to pick up his sword and storm to Koi Tower to demand for answers, but he stopped himself when he remembered Wei Wuxian's words.

"Your safety is our priority. Yours and Jin Ling's," his brother had said.

So, if anything, Jiang Cheng should think of his nephew, who was still at Koi Tower.

As his maternal uncle, Jiang Cheng was only allowed to have Jin Ling at Lotus Pier half a year, only because of the agreement he and Madam Jin had. If he overstepped his boundaries, the Jins might use his helpless, baby nephew as a hostage. It was despicable but at this point, Jiang Cheng believed that there was nothing that they wouldn't do to control him.

Furthermore, he had no proof that everything had happened because of Jin Guangshan. Even that asshole Jin Zixun was gone. He couldn't just claim that he had a dream of his brother and sister telling him that they had been set up.

For now, all he can do was investigate.

So, close to a year after Wei Wuxian's death, Jiang Cheng headed to Burial Mounds to see what he can find. He roamed around the dusty, desolate and barren lands where his brother had built a home for the Wen remnants. He inspected what was left of his brother's workshop, though it had been stripped clean by the clans. He paused at a patch of mud where some rotting lotus stalks were sticking out of and wondered if his brother had managed to grow the lotus seeds that he had given him when they visited Yiling before his sister got married.

The sudden loss he felt in his heart hurt and his eyes prickled at the thought of his brother's hard work all ruined because of Jin Guangshan's greed.

Jiang Cheng shook his head to snap himself back into the present. When he couldn't find anything in the Burial Mounds, he left, walking into dingy little Yiling where everything was grey and drab. Nothing much had changed there but there seem to be a different air about the town. The people there seemed less despondent, more upbeat.

Was the death of Yiling Laozu such a good thing for them? With Lotus Pier so far away, Yiling had always been a dangerous location since it was so close to the Burial Mounds. But with Wei Wuxian taking over the Burial Mounds and being so close by, Yiling was at least safe from fierce corpses. Now they had no protectors.

"I thought you said your crops were all ruined two weeks ago?" a man loudly asked a nearby farmer, who was proudly displaying his fresh vegetables.

"Fuxing Zushi is really kind," the farmer said to his customer. "My crops were eaten by that grasshopper infestation last month. I prayed for his help and the next day i woke up, I had new crops growing!"

"That quickly?" the customer questioned, looking in shock at the vegetables, which were large and flawless.

Fuxing Zushi?

Jiang Cheng had never heard of that name before. Was this a new god?

"I can't believe that our Yiling Laozu has become the God of Renewal!" laughed the farmer, "I didn't believe it at first but after what happened, I will gladly go to his temple to pray everyday!"

What?

Jiang Cheng stormed over to the farmer and slammed his palm onto the stall, making the wobbly thing shake.

"What did you say? Yiling Laozu, a god!?" he asked the surprised farmer.

"Well, yes," the farmer answered hesitantly, intimidated by the cultivator's aggressive stance. "A few months back, the head of the town's son got severely sick and no one could heal the child. His mother went crazy trying to get physicians to cure him but nothing worked until she had a dream one day where Yiling Laozu came to her and told her that the child will be cured if they built a temple for him under the name Fuxing Zushi."

"Oh, it was a dream?" the customer interjected. "I heard that the mother saw him appear to the child in the night and healed him? "

"No, it was a dream," the farmer said. "My wife told me so. And she's the biggest gossip in town so I'm sure she got it right."

"But my sister-," the customer was cut off by Jiang Cheng who waved away their worthless banter.

"So the temple was built?" Jiang Cheng asked, frowning heavily. Was it really his brother or something else using his name?

"It was. The boy recovered immediately the day after the mother had her dream so she convinced her husband to build the temple so as not to offend Fuxing Zushi," answered the farmer.

"Was this the only case where he 'appeared'?" Jiang Cheng asked. "What were his characteristics like?"

The two men looked at each other before giving him more accounts of 'encounters' with this new god.

Like old Li Yung, whose wife passed away without revealing the location in which she had hidden the family heirlooms she wanted to pass to her only grandchild. Even after months of searching his house high and low, he couldn't find it. His grandchild, who was only 9 came to his house one day and dug up a small package under a floorboard, revealing money and the family heirlooms her grandmother had squirreled away.

When questioned, she revealed that her grandmother had appeared before her in a dream with a black-clad god she'd reverently referred to as Fuxing Zushi. Her grandmother told her that the merciful god was allowing her to tell her the secret location before she passed on for her reincarnation.

And given that the location was very accurate, many who heard the story believed the child.

At first, no one made the connection between Yiling Laozu with Fuxing Zushi. That was until a mother lost her only child in an accident that she witnessed herself. Devastated, she carried her dead child up to the Burial Mounds to beg the long gone Yiling Laozu for help. Everyone had feared that she would return with a living corpse for a child.

Instead, she returned the next day with the body and buried the child peacefully, telling everyone that she had a dream that the Yiling Laozu, who was now Fuxing Zushi, would allow her to have her child back. And sure enough, she became pregnant again by her husband merely a month later. (1)

Then, there was that story of an orphaned boy whose pet dog was killed by some bullies. He was a street child and the dog had been his only companion and protector. By then, gossip about Fuxing Zushi had gone around quite a bit so the sad and embittered boy had gone to the foot of Burial Mounds and prayed for justice against his trespassers.

The next day, the bullies woke up crying, having pissed themselves in their beds. After cajoling from their parents, they reported having seen a dark shadowy figure with red eyes hovering over them, warning them of the consequences of being bullies. When the boy heard about it, he ran around telling everyone about how Fuxing Zushi had punished them for their transgressions.

"The parents of the bullies were quite angry," the farmer said. "They tried to beat up the poor child for 'cursing' their children but he managed to run away."

"Oh, I witnessed that myself," said the brown-nosing customer. "The poor boy was actually hit a few times before one of the parents slipped and fell. He took the opportunity to run away."

"Good for him," commented Jiang Cheng. "And then?"

"The next morning, the parents came running out of their homes and into the market, screaming and crying, praying to the sky about their repentance and kowtowing to the ground. It was quite the sight," the farmer reported, a tilted smile on his wrinkled face. "Serves those snobs right."

"Were there more sightings?" Jiang Cheng asked, still unsure if it was truly his brother. It does seem like Wei Wuxian to have this kind of dark humour but he wouldn't put it past a fox spirit posing as a god in his brother's name.

There WERE more encounters. So the men told him of the young man who slipped and fell from the ledge but survived with a broken leg. No one knew where he was and no one could find him. That was, until Fuxing Zushi came to his wife in a dream and gave her a vision of the place where the starved young man was sheltering from the elements.

And then, the one where a young boy's mother had died suddenly, leaving the poor, newly orphaned child with no money for her burial. He was digging a hole in the forest with his bare hands for her grave, praying for her to reincarnate well when a young man in black appeared suddenly to point at the ground not too far from the hole. Fearful but curious, the child did as he was told, digging into the hard, cold earth with his bleeding hands.

Only to find a forgotten treasure, which he sold with the blessing of the god to buy food for himself.

"The child found work with the Liu household as a servant recently," the customer said, pointing to a moderate-sized house. "He's been telling everyone that Fuxing Zushi is the reason he survived last winter."

Jiang Cheng thought about the stories told to him for a long moment.

Of course, there were deferring details, like whether Wei Wuxian appeared before them in a dream or not. Or that he came as a beautiful young man or a frightening black figure with red eyes, depending on the transgression of the person he was visiting.

But the single similarity that all the stories shared was that he always appeared on a dark night with the moon shining brightly behind him and with glittering stars in his hair and robes.

"The head of the town finally built the temple after everyone agreed that it would be best for our patron god," the farmer concluded. Jiang Cheng grabbed the man's elbow when he finished the story.

"Where is this temple!?" he demanded of the man.

The 'temple' was merely a hut, barely large enough for two person to kneel in. When Jiang Cheng went in, he took up the space of the 'hall' easily enough.

It was dingy and small, just like Yiling itself. The community must have pooled their money to build what they could afford for their patron god.

On the altar, there was an incense tray that had only one or two burning incense, a few paltry fruits for offerings and a very, extremely, unflattering painting of his brother. As in, it looked more like a drawing of Ox-head than a god of Wei Wuxian's caliber. If his brother saw it, he would have cried in despair. Or laughter. Or both.

For his part, Jiang Cheng didn't know whether to cry or laugh.

So he settled for anger instead.

He was angry that his brother time and time again deserted him. Even now, he returned to the people of Yiling as a godly figure without remembering to show himself to his own brother. Even if they did not share the same blood, they grew up together! Surely, it counted for something!

Furthermore...

Furthermore...

Jiang Cheng missed him.

He wanted to save him that time at the Burial Mounds, wanted to pull him away from the out-of-control fierce corpses but he had been too late and Wei Wuxian had looked at him one last time, so sad and accepting of his fate...

And then, he'd smiled at Jiang Cheng.

Before he knew it, Sect Leader Nie had pulled him away and the brother that his sister died to save was no more.

By the time Jiang Cheng returned to himself, anger spent, he was standing in front of his brother's (terrible) ruined painting, an upended altar and a crowd that was looking aghast and horrified at his desecrating their community temple.

Immediately after, all his anger evaporated, leaving Jiang Cheng with nothing but regret.

What was he doing? Trashing his own brother's temple.

"Don't worship a demonic cultivator!" he shouted at them, angry tears still in his eyes.

He stormed off and flew back to Lotus Pier, where he proceeded to use Zidian aggressively on the training dolls until they were beyond recognition. Then, he locked himself in his rooms to drink jars of his brother's (2nd) favourite wine while rage crying till he passed out.

When Jiang Cheng opened his eyes, he was sitting at the edge of a pier with the bright round moon shining down upon him. It was so big and luminous that he felt as if he couldn't look at it without going blind.

This time, there was no one there with him, except for the white and black bunnies hopping around in the only pavilion present.

Jiang Cheng looked around and saw no light around, not even the small blinking lights in the distance that indicated other houses and shops. Then he realised that the large round moon was not reflected in the water reflection. Instead, it reflected a dark sky streaming with glittering stars.

And as he looked, he realised that there was a negative space in the reflection to his right. A space where no stars were reflected, and it was shaped like a person sitting beside him. He turned to his right but there was no one there so he looked back to his reflection in the water beneath his feet.

As he squinted at the reflection, the negative space turned to the reflection of him, highlighting the side profile of a person.

"Haiya, Jiang Cheng. You are still so bad-tempered. Trashing my temple. Ah well, at least you didn't hurt any of the attendants there. They don't get paid to take care of it, you know"

Hearing that familiar voice, Jiang Cheng jumped and turned to his right to look at Wei Wuxian in shock.

"You-! You're dead!" he said.

"I am," Wei Wuxian answered. Then he paused, looking contemplative, "Somewhat."

"You weren't here just now!" Jiang Cheng said, though that should have been the least of his worries. He pointed to the reflection, which he now saw reflected Wei Wuxian clearly. What in the world...?

"Oh yeah. I'm still trying to master shadowmancy," Wei Wuxian explained elusively. "It's convenient but so very hard to master."

"I'm sure you'll get it soon," Jiang Cheng said bitterly. "You're a genius, after all."

"Hm? Genius?" Wei Wuxian repeated. "Not amongst the deities. Everyone there are equally extraordinary. They have to be, or they wouldn't have been chosen."

He shrugged. "So I don't really stand out here. Except for being the newbie."

"That must be hard for you, not getting any attention," Jiang Cheng sneered. It was odd though. He ought to be furious by now as he always was when he thought of his brother. But now, he was as calm as the water reflection, though there was no stopping the bitterness flooding his heart.

"Did you do something to me?" Jiang Cheng asked. "I'm not feeling angry."

"And also, where is this place?" he asked before Wei Wuxian could answer him.

"Hm? Oh. This is my in between space. My realm, so to speak," Wei Wuxian answered. "This place invokes calmness, doesn't it? Here, I can see how everyone is doing and what I can do to help with their futures."

Jiang Cheng scowled. "So you can see futures now? I thought you are the God of Renewal?"

Wei Wuxian gave a laugh. "I don't see futures. Just possibilities."

"Then wha-?" Jiang Cheng started before he stopped himself, frowning. What was he doing? Having a banal conversation on titles with the person who caused his sister's death!?

"Jiang Cheng ah, I know you are angry at me for what happened with the Wens," Wei Wuxian said, reading his darkening expression correctly. "For what it's worth, I'm angry at myself too for letting those things happen. In retrospect, there were so many things I could have done differently but I didn't, and Shijie was the one who suffered for it."

"You can say that now, after all you've done! You even ascended after all the suffering you've bought to my family!" Jiang Cheng sneered, though his volume was not as loud as it would normally be at. "Things are going great for you, isn't it!?"

"I didn't bring the suffering," Wei Wuxian countered calmly, looking at him with dark eyes reflecting the same stars in the water. "The Wens would have come for Lotus Pier regardless. I've scoured through the possibilities trying to find a solution that would never have ended with the burning of Lotus Pier and the Sunshot Campaign. But out of all the possibilities, the only ones without Lotus Pier and Gusu falling under the Wens are when Wen Rouhan died an early death."

"So you're saying the only way to save my family and Lotus Pier, and everyone else, is if Wen Rouhan was dead," Jiang Cheng said incredulously. "How many possibilities... had you seen?"

"Too many," Wei Wuxian replied, looking mournful and aged. He gestured around the quiet realm, where only the sounds of water existed. "Time passes differently here. I could stay here for years and not a second has passed in the living world. Or I could stay a minute here and years would have gone by for you."

Jiang Cheng looked around. Had his brother been here alone the whole time? Just...just like him? What about the other gods? Do they not meet or socialise? Wei Wuxian was a social butterfly. Those gods shouldn't have just dumped him here to do his work on his own! With only rabbits for company!?

"Haiya. Now you've made me all melancholic," Wei Wuxian complained. "I already had to go through that when I first came here to learn how to control my powers and domain."

Wei Wuxian turned to Jiang Cheng with a smile tinged of wistfulness. It made Jiang Cheng feel a little sad seeing Wei Wuxian like this. It reminded him of when his brother was crazed from all the use of the demonic cultivation.

"I know what you did," Wei Wuxian said to him. "Your mother told me that you led the Wens away from me."

Jiang Cheng froze. No one was supposed to know about that. His mother?

"It's why you lost your golden core, isn't it?" Wei Wuxian said, sounding regretful. Jiang Cheng blinked away his tears, keeping mum.

"In light of this, I think I should tell you the truth as well," Wei Wuxian sighed. "I lied when I said that I was sending you to Baoshan Sanren. You didn't go to her mountain. You were intercepted by Wen Qing and she transferred my golden core into you."

Jiang Cheng gaped at him in disbelief.

"What-?"

"We're both fools, aren't we?" Wei Wuxian lamented. "Sacrificing ourselves for each other. Ah, we really are brothers, even when we don't share the same blood."

"Why!?" Jiang Cheng asked, rage slowly building up. Was his sacrifice for nothing if his brother just threw it all away!?

Wei Wuxian just looked at him, his gaze gentle as he wiped away Jiang Cheng's angry tears with a silk handkerchief.

"Because you are my brother," he answered, simply and truthfully.

Jiang Cheng stood up, brushing away Wei Wuxian's attempt at consoling him.

"How could you!? Was everything I did for you-? Does it mean nothing!?" Jiang Cheng raged, his words becoming incoherent the more he spoke. "Now you're dead and Ah-Jie is dead and I'm alone!"

"You're not alone, A-Cheng."

Jiang Cheng whirled around at the soft voice of his sister and his breath hitched.

"Jie...?"

"A-Cheng," Jiang Yanli said, opening her arms for her little brother, who wrapped his arms around her slim waist and started bawling like the child he used to be when he broke his ankle looking for a runaway Wei Ying.

The Jiang siblings slumped onto the side of the pier and Wei Ying joined them, sitting beside Jiang Cheng with their sister on the other side of the weeping Sect Leader.

For a long time, the three of them sat at the pier, Jiang Cheng's hand clasped tightly around his older brother's hand and his head on his sister's shoulder.

This was the only thing he had ever wanted.

Jiang Cheng woke up the next morning to tear-soaked sheets and swollen eyes. In his hand was a lilac silk handkerchief. When he opened it, he realised that it was something that used to belong to his mother, whose belongings had all been burned by that bitch Wang Lingjiao the day the Wens took over Lotus Pier.

His brother had slipped it into his hand before he fell asleep in his sister's embrace.

It was real.

Everything he dreamt of was real.

His sister and brother was watching over him and A-Ling.

They may not be alive but they weren't gone.

He wasn't alone.

Jiang Cheng curled around the handkerchief, his tears returning. He laid there for a long time, mourning his parents, his sister and for the brother he dearly missed but never acknowledged.

After he managed to pull himself together, he dragged himself out of his bed, got dressed and went to his office. None of his disciples said anything about his swollen, red-rimmed eyes. They knew better than to ask. It wasn't an uncommon sight, after all.

It was then that he was informed of a little miracle surging across Yunmeng.

That morning, the residents woke up to blooming lotuses in every body of water, even though it was not yet the season for lotuses as it was still early in the summer and the seeds had just been sown a week prior. Several times, the children had to rescue some of the seedlings from puddles and too small ponds to be transplanted into the bigger ponds and lakes.

Jiang Cheng's assistant reported that they would probably have a surplus of harvest this year because of that.

Hearing that, the sect leader huffed and sniffled. Then he told his second-in-charge to have the temple in Yiling rebuilt with funding from Lotus Pier.

"And make sure it is at least presentable," he told his right-hand-man.

If his stupid brother was a God, he deserved a better temple.

"And name it the Temple of the Moon and Stars," Jiang Cheng said.

"Thank you, Jiang Cheng."

He was once again standing at the pier, looking out into the endless calm waters.

"Why is it so empty here?" he asked Wei Wuxian, who shrugged.

"At first, there was just a pier when I arrived," Wei Wuxian replied. "When Shijie and the peacock joined me, I made another pavilion elsewhere for them to live. They deserve some place bright and lively."

"So you're on your own here?"

"Sometimes, yes," Wei Wuxian admitted. "But the others are often here to help me with the paperwork."

Jiang Cheng frowned in confusion. "There's paperwork in Heaven?"

"There's paperwork everywhere," Wei Wuxian lamented. "Especially in Diyu. So much paperwork."

"You deserve it," Jiang Cheng said mercilessly as his brother cried out, offended. "You ran away from work in Lotus Pier and now in death, you have to work triple the amount of work as punishment! Fitting!"

"A-Cheng! You are so mean!" commented his brother with a pout. Then, he slumped on the pier, half sprawled in those beautiful black silk robes of his. The two of them sat down at the pier, bare feet kicking the water idly.

"Where's A-Jie?" Jiang Cheng asked after a moment.

"Oh, she's with Qing-jie and Jin Zixuan, watching over your nephews," Wei Wuxian answered.

"Qing- Wen Qing is here?" Jiang Cheng asked, incredulous.

"Well, yeah," Wei Wuxian answered. "I needed an assistant and she was the first person I thought of when they asked me."

Then he squinted at Jiang Cheng suspiciously.

"Are you still mad at her? You shouldn't be. She had nothing to do with Wen Ruohan. I should know. I seen both their files. Furthermore, she's already dead and she's one of the best assistant a god can have. Ling Wen said so herself," he said quickly.

"Who the hell cares about that!? She cut your golden core out!" Jiang Cheng said loudly, not caring whoever this Ling Wen was.

"I told her to," Wei Wuxian replied. "Because my little brother was dying."

That took the wind in his sail out quickly. He deflated immediately, looking away to glumly glare at the horizon.

"Haiya, Jiang Cheng, I wanted to talk to you about something else and you distracted me," Wei Wuxian complained. Before Jiang Cheng could snap at him, he pointed to the water.

Jiang Cheng looked in and his eyes widened.

He saw his mother and his father, who smiled fondly at her. Yu Ziyuan, or a facsimile of her, smiled back, happiness reflected in her eyes. Her expression was completely devoid of any bitterness that was so embedded in her for so long that Jiang Cheng almost couldn't recognise her.

"What-? What is this? Another world? Have you brought me here to show off-?" Jiang Cheng spluttered in anger and resentment. Why show him this!?

"No, I brought you here to let you see what will become of them in their next life," Wei Wuxian replied calmly. "Your mother wished that they would be husband and wife again in their next life right before she died, with no more of the bitterness and anger between them. So when I found them in the reincarnation cycle, I made sure to set them on the correct path to meet again."

"I even had to ask a favor from the Yue Lao," Wei Wuxian explained, then he winced. "I can tell you for a god who believes in true love, he is hard to bargain with."

"Then, will A-Jie join them?" Jiang Cheng asked hesitantly, voice small.

"Not yet," replied Wei Wuxian easily. "She and Jin Zixuan want to wait for you and Jin Ling. So for the time being, they are my assistants."

"Oh, but..." Jiang Cheng continued watching the pond reflection until it faded away.

"Though not for a long while. You'll live a long life before you leave the living world," Wei Wuxian hummed. "YunmengJiang will thrive under your rule before you pass on."

"And Jin Ling?" the sect leader asked.

"He too will have a long life and will thrive as a sect leader in the future," Wei Wuxian prophesized.

"Just like his Jiujiu," the god said with a proud smile on his face as he looked at Jiang Cheng.

Jiang Cheng swallowed, a small smile blooming on his face.

"And when it is time for you to join the afterlife, I will make sure to arrange for you and shijie to join Jiang-shushu and Yu-furen," Wei Wuxian said, "The Jiang family will not be complete without their little master, no?"

Jiang Cheng nodded, blinking away his smarting eyes. Then, he asked, "But...what about you?"

Wei Wuxian huffed. "What about me? My place is here now. Watching over all of you and making sure you are all taken care of."

"Alone?" his brother said, sadly.

"No, don't worry. I won't be," Wei Wuxian assured. "For now, I have shijie, Qing-jie and the peacock. And later, well, who knows...?"

He shrugged nonchalantly.

"What is important right now is you and A-Ling. We'll be here watching over both of you," he continued. "And when we can, you'll see us when you dream."

Jiang Cheng blinked away his tears again. "You promise...?"

"I promise. And I'll make sure to fulfill it this time."

A month after the temple in Yiling was rebuilt, parts of Yunmeng were hit badly by floods, drowning lots of their agricultural produce, though there were minimal casualties and few deaths reported.

The sect leader had to send his disciples to the more affected areas to help the residents though there was no saving the crops.

"Oi, Wei Wuxian, if you could, this tired brother of yours would appreciate a little help," he grouched as he poured over the reports of the floods and the projected loss that Yunmeng would be facing. Many would probably be facing starvation and homelessness come winter. Some might not even survive through the season.

He sighed. There was no helping it. He would have to import from the neighbouring sects and Gusu. Or, Lord help him, LanlingJin, who would surely tax him heavily, because Jin Guangshan was an asshole like that, never mind their familial connection.

However, a week later, when reports started flooding in about the waters receding back to the rivers, Jiang Cheng knew he didn't need to send any letters of negotiation for trade. Because, a day after the flood, new growth started flourishing immediately. Despite having no one sowing any seeds, new plants have taken roots under the muddy water and sprung out the moment the nutrient - heavy river water receded.

By the end of the month, their crops have doubled their original estimated amount and they had surplus that year.

The residents of Yunmeng had hailed it as a miracle, but Jiang Cheng knew better. He knew it was the work of Fuxing Zushi, the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal, the ex-Yiling Patriarch. His brother, Wei Wuxian.

By the end of the year, three new commissioned temples were opened to the public in Yunmeng.

If he had a small one built within Lotus Cove, near the Ancestral Hall, well, that was no one's business but his own.

And if he brought Jin Ling there to pray for protection every time he was at Lotus Pier, well, Wei Wuxian had always looked out for the young ones, and his nephew was more precious to the both of them than anyone else, barring their sister.

Wei Wuxian, the Patron God of Yunmeng, would surely keep an eye on his nephew.

*

*

End Chapter 4

*

*

Extra Snippet

The first time he stumbled upon a temple of *Fuxing **Mushi***, Jiang Cheng thought he had misheard.

That was, until he entered the temple and saw the female version of his brother's painting hung in the middle of the altar.

His eyes grew so big they nearly popped out of the sockets and his jaw dropped in disbelief.

*Oh, the Venerable **Mother** of Renewal.*

Jiang Cheng did not even make it out of the temple before he burst out laughing until tears fell from his eyes.

*

End Snippet

Chapter End Notes

So, WY's been visiting everyone in their dreams and learning how to travel by shadows and spaces in between. But physically, he can't go to the mortal realm until he's finished learning how to control his powers.

(1) some of the stories from Yiling are from the November Prompts, with changes since rumours tend to change details.

I'm going on a trip for the week so this is the last update until Christmas. Probably. Maybe.

Return to Me

Chapter Summary

Lan Wangji dreams. He dreams of his lost love and the life they could have had together. Wei Ying promises. Promises that their life together will begin again.

Chapter Notes

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!

Hope everyone enjoys this Wangxian chapter this festive season!

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Lan Wangji returned with his son in a haze, with his back all bloodied from the 33 lashes he received before the news of his love's death reached him.

He arrived to his worried brother and an incensed uncle waiting at the Jingshi.

"He is my son," he said, handing a feverish A-Yuan to his brother. "His name is A-Yuan."

That was the last thing he remembered after that. From what he surmised, he had passed out into his shocked uncle's arms and had to be carried into his rooms so that the healers could be summoned.

The days after were blurry and painful as the re-opened wounds on his back apparently became infected and it took a while for his golden core, already weakened from the lashes, to counter the infection. Coupled with the loss of his heart, his xiongzhong had thought that he would lose Lan Wangji just when he gained a nephew.

By the time he returned to awareness, Lan Xichen reported that A-Yuan had recovered from his fever with no memories of his past.

Perhaps it is better this way, Lan Wangji thought. This way, no one will ever know of his association with the Wens remnants and Wei Ying.

This meant that Lan Wangji would essentially become his son's secret keeper and the only one to ever know that Wei Ying loved A-Yuan dearly.

And that last fact hurt the most.

The only other person to ever truly know how good and loving Wei Ying was, now no longer remembered him.

"You said his name is 'Yuan'," Lan Xichen said. "I wrote his name in our family registrar as 'hope'."

He didn't say it out loud but Lan Wangji understood that the 'hope' Lan Xichen had in mind was that he hoped Lan Wangji would find his son to be a reason to continue living, even if the love of his life was gone.

Lan Wangji did not reply. He merely closed his eyes, relieved that his brother had accepted A-Yuan into the family, giving the twice-orphaned boy the protection of a clan.

He dropped into dreamless sleep in between his bouts of awareness and the healers surmised that it would take him at least 6 months to completely heal from the lashes, before he could go into seclusion for his punishment.

Sometimes, Lan Xichen would bring A-Yuan to see him, even though it wasn't technically allowed. His xiongzhang argued vehemently with any and all the elders against isolating a father from his son (because it just hit too close to home for the both of them).

Unsurprisingly, his Shufu was on their side when it came to this issue.

But no matter how much his Shufu asked, Lan Wangji never revealed who the mother of his child was, keeping mum even under threats of more severe punishments or a longer seclusion period.

"His mother is dead," was all he answered, remembering the happier times in Yiling when A-Yuan called a stunned Wei Ying his A-Niang. (Wei Ying really brought it upon himself, saying that he birthed A-Yuan, but the delight on the boy's face stopped the both of them from protesting too vehemently.)

The devastation on his face and the subsequent worsening of his condition stopped his uncle from interrogating him further. Even after he recovered, he never bothered to answer his uncle's queries, until Lan Qiren just sighed in defeat and exasperation.

No one will know of A-Yuan's origins, as far as Lan Wangji was concerned. He would rather take this secret to the grave than to endanger the only thing he had left of Wei Ying.

The first time A-Yuan called him Die-die while he was recovering from his injuries, Lan Wangji wept, laying helpless and almost broken, face down on his bed.

His brother had tried to take A-Yuan away, thinking that it would be easier for him but Lan Wangji reached out and grasped the boy's hand earnestly and called him 'er zi'(1).

At that, the boy smiled as brightly and as carefree as his Wei Ying once did. The sight of it made Wangji's heart soar triumphantly.

Wèi Ying wasn't dead. He will never be as long as his son was alive.

Lan Wangji didn't know then how correct he was in believing that Wei Ying still lived, if only in another form.

While he was still healing from the worst brunt of his injuries, he barely dreamt at all. But after a while, the dreams started rolling in.

At first, it was about happier times. When he was young and in his mother's arms. When he first met Wei Ying, the archery competition, the Xuanwu cave and the memory most precious to him, Yiling.

The cave where he professed his love but was spurned.

Here, his dream of a catatonic Wei Ying warped into a vision of Wei Ying in tears, calling out his name as he wept for lost opportunities.

He woke up grief-stricken, hoarsely calling out for Wei Ying until he passed out from the pain and fatigue. He should have deteriorated then, but he did not.

Instead, his golden core seemed to burn brighter and stronger than before, healing him faster than any of the Lan Healers anticipated.

Then, he started dreaming of Wei Ying standing in a dark pier with a bright round moon illuminating his beauty.

"Lan Zhan," the sweet mirage said with a smile, "Has A-Yuan been a good boy? He must be. He's as sweet and good a child like you were."

And Lan Wangji, filled with longing and love, was unable to do anything beyond staring and answering, "Mn."

"He calls you Die-die? How adorable," Wei Ying said with a laugh. "Just like in Yiling!"

"Mn. You are A-Niang," Lan Wangji agreed.

"Lan Zhan! Haiya! You're going to teach our son the wrong thing," Wei Ying protested.

"No," Lan Wangji replied. "Everything right. Everything Wei Ying believed in."

Wei Ying gave him a soft look filled with unspoken affection.

"Say it again, Lan Zhan," Wei Ying said quietly. "Tell me what you said in that cave."

Lan Wangji's throat tightened.

"My memory is truly awful and I can't remember a lot of things that happened in the past. Including that time in the Nightless City," Wei Ying admitted then, "but I know now that you bared your heart to me then. So I want to hear it now."

"I like you," Lan Wangji croaked. Then, louder, "I like you. I love you."

The tears that fell from Wei Ying's eyes looked like stars, gleaming crystalline jewels that fell from the sky.

"Lan Zhan," his dream Wei Ying said breathlessly. "I like you too. I fancy you. I love you. I whatever you. I wish... I wish I knew then, what I knew now. I wish I had told you everything. I wish... I wish I had gone back with you to Gusu."

Lan Wangji reached out to his beautiful dream Wei Ying, gently wiping his tears and Wei Ying threw his arms around his neck. Lan Wangji reciprocated immediately, his own vision going blurry with unshed tears.

"Lan Zhan! Lan Zhan!" Wei Ying repeated over and over, holding tightly to him.

This was all Lan Wangji ever wanted.

But alas, it was all just an ephemeral dream...

... Or so he thought.

The morning after, he managed to pull himself up from his bed to his cabinet, where he constructed a hidden shrine with only an incense burner, a wooden stand with Wei Ying's name on it and a peony preserved with a talisman, which was the only thing he had of Wei Ying aside from A-Yuan.

He didn't know why he made it but it just felt right.

"Wei Ying," he croaked, voice hoarse from the months of disuse. "I'm going into seclusion soon. Please watch after A-Yuan."

When Lan Xichen arrived that morning with A-Yuan, he found Lan Wangji sitting up at his table, completely and miraculously healed from his ordeal with barely any scarring.

"Wangji! How did you-?" Lan Xichen trailed off as Lan Wangji got up to embrace his son, who happily threw his arms around him.

"Die-die, A-Niang told me to give you a hug when I see you," A-Yuan whispered, hugging him tightly. "To tell you; I love you and we'll see each other again in our dreams."

Lan Wangji buried his face into his son's hair and nodded, tears coming to his eyes.

Yes, they'll see each other again in their dreams.

"Die-die, can we go see the rabbits? A-Niang told me about the rabbits," A-Yuan exclaimed. Lan Xichen looked suitably confused by the child's words but before he could ask, Lan Wangji stood up with A-Yuan's hand in his.

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed. "We will go before Die-die has to go into seclusion."

"Wangji," Lan Xichen intervened. "The healers have not approved of your health yet so you need not have to go into seclusion yet."

"They will," Lan Wangji answered, though he did not have any explanations on how he knew or how he managed to heal all his wounds within just 4 months. "I want to spend a day with my son."

Lan Xichen could not bring himself to deny the request so he nodded and let his younger brother leave hand-in-hand with his son.

Predictably, Lan Yuan loved the bunnies, hopping after them and feeding them the greens that the kitchen staff were kind enough to provide. Lan Wangji watched his son as he remembered the way Wei Ying kissed and cuddled him in Yiling.

Just as his mood begin to spiral, A-Yuan approached him with his little arms full of precious cargo.

"Diedie, can we give two to A-Niang? Then, A-Niang won't be lonely," A-Yuan said, lifting two rabbits, one black and one white.

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed, thinking that he would bring them back to the field after A-Yuan fell asleep.

But he was so fatigued by the trip out to the field that he fell asleep that night with his son in his arms as soon as they arrived back to the Jingshi, with their two smuggled rabbits quietly nibbling a cabbage leaf in front of his hidden shrine for Wei Ying.

In his dream, his Wei Ying was standing at the pier of the moonlit world with the two rabbits in his arms.

"Lan Zhan!" Wei Ying called out happily. "They are so big now. You raised them so well!"

His expression became soft and wistful. "Just like you are raising A-Yuan."

"Thank you, Lan Zhan," Wei Ying said, touching his hand gently. His hand was always so cold. "I'll cherish them till the end of time."

As long as you are happy, Lan Wangji thought but didn't say as his awareness drifted away. Wei Ying's face shifted to disappointment before his vision of him turn black.

"Ah, it looks like you are waking..." Wei Ying's voice drifted away before... Lan Wangji opened his eyes to the darkness of his room.

When he looked around, he realised that the rabbits were gone. Panicked, Lan Wangji looked for them all over the Jingshi and when he enquired A-Yuan about them in the morning, the boy blinked at him.

"A-Niang took them to be his companions in the moon," the boy inexplicably answered.

Lan Wangji was so distraught by the loss of his rabbits that he didn't ask for further explanation. He went to Wei Ying's shrine and lifted the incense burner's cover to clean the ash, burn more incense and apologise for losing the precious rabbits. He paused when he found a little sprout poking out from the ash.

Curious, he potted the plant into a small black pot he found and left it at the shrine.

The next day, the mysterious little plant sported three white blossoms with dark centres, purple bordering black. The tip of the white petals were lined with blood red. It was not any flower he had ever seen before but it was more beautiful than flower that he had ever seen. He decided then to plant the flower in his garden so that it could be cared for while he was gone.

When A-Yuan saw the flowering plant that morning, he pointed to each one and announced, "One for A-Yuan, one for Diedie and one for A-Niang."

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed, still feeling puzzled by the appearance of the fast growing flower. When he looked towards his brother, the Lan Sect Leader was staring at him intently.

"I've spoken to the healers and they've confirmed your complete recovery," his xiongzhang said. "They have never seen anyone heal so fast before."

The truth was, Lan Wangji never thought much of his miraculous recovery, his mind eclipsed by thoughts of Wei Ying during that period. After that, his priority was A-Yuan, now christened as Lan Yuan, and settling the amnesiac child with the other children. The Sunshot Campaign had resulted in many orphans, so A-Yuan's situation was not unusual nor did he stand out.

Except, the Second Jade of Lan had claimed the boy as his illegitimate child.

Despite the no gossip rule, this little fact still managed to make itself known throughout the sect and A-Yuan became something of a novelty.

Before Lan Wangji had to go into seclusion as part of his punishment, he asked his brother to love his child like he would his own.

"A-Yuan is the child of my heart," he said. "He is precious to me."

Lan Xichen's face was pale with understanding, though there was a frown between his brows. Lan Wangji did not bother to tell him what he meant by child of his heart but he knew that his brother would know what he meant.

He'd survived losing Wei Ying.

But he would not survive losing A-Yuan.

During seclusion, he meditated a lot.

With inedia, he didn't need to eat and he seldom needed to sleep.

But when he did, he dreamt...

He dreamt of a dark but perfect world, where Wei Ying sat in a pavilion with his sister and brothers, laughing as he watched A-Yuan play with a toddler Jin Ling.

"Lan Zhan! You're finally here!" his dream Wei Ying called out, beckoning to him. "Why do you not sleep even in seclusion?"

"Do you think everyone is a lazy ass like you!?" Jiang Wanyin sniped, looking less angry than he usually would.

Jiang Yanli giggled. "A-Xian was quite impatient waiting for everyone to fall asleep. He'd work quite hard to clear his work."

"At the rate he's going, he might be able to visit the mortal world in a century or two," Jin Zixuan said jokingly. Then he yelped when Wei Ying jumped on him to smack his head.

"Don't jinx me! I want to visit my son and nephew soon!" Wei Ying exclaimed.

"What about me?" Lan Wangji asked, dazed from the feeling of joy pooling in his belly from seeing Wei Ying so happy with his family.

"What-? Of course I'm going to visit my Lan Zhan," Wei Ying said, turning back to the white-clad cultivator.

Behind Wei Ying, Jiang Wanyin and Jin Zixuan mock gagged at the words, a moment of shared misery for having witnessed such unwarranted public displays of affection.

"YOU are all just jealous," Wei Ying declared, running to Lan Wangji to wrap his hands around the white-clad cultivator's arm.

"Why would I? I'm married to your sister," Jin Zixuan quipped back.

"WE KNOW," Jiang Wanyin and Wei Ying sniped back with scowls and grimaces.

"Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, come meet my nephew," Wei Ying said, pulling him along to where the two children are petting the bunnies that had disappeared from his room.

The toddler, about a year old now, barely looked up at him as he was preoccupied with the fluffy creatures in the older boy's lap. He was gently stroking the two bunnies as instructed by his older cousin.

"Aren't they adorable?" Wei Ying cooed, looking as if he wanted to cuddle up to the two children and the bunnies.

"Yes," Lan Wangji answered, eyes never looking away from his Wei Ying, who looked more beautiful than he had ever seen. It wasn't just his rich black robes with silvery stars and delicate red embroidery. He was healthier than the gaunt figure he had been in Yiling.

"Hey, that's new," Jiang Wanyin suddenly commented, breaking into the moment.

"Hm? What's new?" Wei Ying asked, turning around to look at his foster brother.

"That. On your back. The phases of the moon," the Jiang Sect Leader answered, approaching them to indicate the silvery embroidery on the back of Wei Ying's robes.

"Oh, that," Wei Ying said. "It just appeared suddenly. Must be from the temple you built."

"Oh yes," Jiang Yanli said, clapping her hands. "That was such a sweet thing you did, A-Cheng."

Jiang Wanyin's face flushed and Lan Wangji asked, "Temple?"

"Oh, A-Cheng built me a tem- umph!"

"Shut up! Shut UP!" Jiang Wanyin exclaimed, clamping a hand around his brother's mouth. His face was red with embarrassment and annoyance. His sister was giggling behind him with a hand to her mouth.

"A-Cheng built me a temple!" Wei Ying crowed, pulling away from the Jiang Sect Leader triumphantly. "He loves me so much he built me a nice, new temple!"

"Shut UP!" Jiang Wanyin shouted, chasing after his wayward brother, who dodged him by running around Lan Wangji.

Lan Wangji channeled his pettiness by grasping an arm around the black-clad cultivator and extending his other hand out to push Jiang Wanyin into the water but alas, the man managed to straighten himself before he fell into the endless black water.

"Lan Wangji!" Jiang Wanyin looked as if he would deck the Second Jade of Lan but Lan Wangji couldn't bring himself to care.

"Lan Zhan made my first shrine and Jiang Cheng built my first official temple," Wei Ying said happily, clapping his hands. Seeing his joyful expression, Jiang Wanyin subsided and grimaced at Lan Wangji before retreating back to the pavilion with his sister and brother-in-law.

"Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, you're so good to me," Wei Ying chirped, wrapping his arms around the taller cultivator's neck. He ignored his brother's shout to stop being so shameless. "You're the first person to pray to me, you know."

"Mn," Lan Wangji hummed, wrapping his arms tightly around the love of his life, wishing that this was all real. That this dream would never end.

"I can't wait for Lan Zhan to ascend as well!" Wei Ying said happily, smiling so brightly that Lan Wangji didn't register his words until much later, when he was awake.

Ascend? Why would he ascend? How could he when it meant that he would have to cultivate to immortality first?

With death, maybe he would be able to see his Wei Ying again.

But cultivating to immortality would be nothing but torture now that he was without Wei Ying, so why would he work towards that?

No, he will only cultivate so that he could help others, the way Wei Ying had dedicated his whole life to.

Ascension was something he did not want.

Not when it meant that he would never be with his soulmate again.

Sometimes, he meets Wei Ying alone on the pier, sitting with their bare feet dipped in cool, dark waters. Wei Ying would lean his head on his shoulder and exclaim indignantly that Lan Wangji was taller than him now.

Lan Wangji would hold his hand tightly in his lap, unwilling to let go.

Of this beautiful dream.

Of this precious moment.

"All I want to do is sleep all day, because when I do dream, you're still with me," Lan Wangji admitted in a whisper to Wei Ying.

"Oh Lan Zhan, you don't have to be asleep for me to be with you," Wei Ying replied. "When you talk to me, I hear you. I just can't go to you physically yet, but I will."

He smiled up to him, like he used to in the Library Pavilion when they were fifteen.

"When the time comes, I will come to you," Wei Ying promised.

Lan Wangji didn't really understand what he meant but he nodded anyway, because that was clearly what Wei Ying wanted and Lan Wangji would not deny his Wei Ying anything. Never again.

He was well into his second year of seclusion when he finally understood what Wei Ying meant.

When Lan Wangji heard the sound of footsteps approaching him amidst his meditation, he opened his eyes and for a moment, thought that he had fallen asleep during his meditation.

Because standing there, in the middle of the seclusion cave, was his Wei Ying.

In his black robes embroidered with stars, lotuses and butterflies at the hem, and the phases of the silver moon on his back.

"Am I dreaming?" Lan Wangji croaked, throat choked with emotions.

"No, Lan Zhan," his beautiful mirage said. "I'm here. I promised I'd be here, didn't I?"

Lan Wangji got up slowly, eyes never moving from Wei Ying's form. He approached the vision cautiously and lifted a hand to touch that beloved, beautiful face. It was cool to the touch but not as cold as a corpse's should be. Wei Ying clasped his hand, eyes falling shut as he nuzzled Lan Wangji's palm.

"Lan Zhan," Wei Ying sniffled. "I wanted to be here for so long and now that I'm here, I don't know what to say."

"It was real," Lan Wangji realised aloud. "My dreams. They were real."

"Yes," Wei Ying answered. "My control over dreams is limited but I tried as much as I could to see you, Jiang Cheng, Jin Ling and A-Yuan."

"We were all connected in our dreams," Lan Wangji surmised correctly.

"Yes," Wei Ying answered easily, as if seeing his family in their dreams was a regular occurrence to him. Given the frequency in which it happened to Lan Wangji, it probably was. "A-Cheng was quite unhappy to find out that A-Yuan had been taken in by the Lans. Apparently, he searched for A-Yuan in the Burial Mounds after I died since he remembered seeing him with me, but he couldn't find him. He said that my son should be in Yunmeng but I reminded him that Yuan-Yuan is your son too."

Though Lan Wangji already considered A-Yuan his own son by then, it awed him to hear it from Wei Ying.

Wei Ying pouted. "He got so huffy with me."

The young god reached out to grab his arm, "Lan Zhan, you must remember to bring A-Yuan to Lotus Pier to see his Jiujiu or Jiang Cheng will complain to me until my ears fall off. He wants to teach A-Yuan how to swim. I told him to teach him at my realm but A-Cheng says that it's not the same since it's in his dreams. The body won't build muscle memory there."

"I think he just wants to see A-Yuan but he won't admit it because he'll have to ask you to bring Yuanyuan to Lotus Pier," Wei Ying finished. "You'll bring A-Yuan to Lotus Pier, won't

you?"

Lan Wangji didn't like Jiang Wanyin, especially since rumours claimed that Jiang Wanyin was the one who killed his brother but seeing Wei Ying now, he knew that it was all just hearsay. Jiang Wanyin had even tried to find A-Yuan, even though he didn't personally know the boy, merely because A-Yuan was precious to Wei Ying.

"Mn, will bring our son to Lotus Pier," he promised. "But Wei Ying, how did you survive? Everyone said that you were torn apart after the destruction of the Stygian Tiger Seal."

"Ah," Wei Ying gaped at him. "Did I not tell you?"

The sheepish god laughed awkwardly, scratching his head. "I can't believe I forgot to tell you. All this time, in the dreams."

"Wei Ying?" Lan Wangji asked.

"Lan Zhan, I did die," Wei Ying admitted. At that, Lan Wangji could literally feel all the blood in his face drain away and he swayed where he stood.

"Lan Zhan! You know what? Let's just take a seat first and I'll tell you the whole story," Wei Ying said immediately, holding onto his arm and leading him to a seat nearby. After seating the pale cultivator down and pouring him a cup of water, Wei Ying sat down himself and started his tale.

"You see, after I died, I woke up on a pier in a dark world..."

"I wanted to come to you first but I needed to set Wen Ning free first," Wei Ying said.

"Wen Ning?" Lan Wangji parroted. "Was he not killed by the Jins?"

"They kept him to experiment on him," Wei Ying explained. "But I freed him and he's at Burial Mounds now."

"LanlingJin, they-?"

"Don't worry, Lan Zhan," Wei Ying said, putting his hand on his chest to stop him from getting up. "In time, everything will be revealed and they will get their own reckoning."

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji intoned.

"Do you trust me?" Wei Ying asked.

"Yes," Lan Wangji answered without hesitation.

"Then trust that everything will fall into place soon enough," Wei Ying said. "And everyone will receive their due."

He smiled at Lan Wangji brightly, "I have a deal with Zhuanlun Wang. Since he is swamped with the reincarnations of the common people and the cultivators are considered the minority, I will be the one overseeing the reincarnations of the cultivators since I have once been one."

"Jin Guangshan will not be able to escape my judgement," Wei Ying promised with a smirk. "Not that Yama will give him any leeway. Yanluo Wang is well known for not having any tolerance for rapists and child abusers."

"Mn, Wei Ying knows better," Lan Wangji admitted after a moment. It seemed like poetic justice to have the instigator of Wei Ying's suffering be judged by his victim. Wei Ying will definitely make sure that Jin Guangshan receives just punishment.

"Anyway, I came to see you and A-Yuan," Wei Ying said, brushing off the topic about the Jins. "After that, Jiang Cheng and Jin Ling, since they are both in Lotus Pier right now."

Lan Wangji reached out to grasp his hand, desperation sparking in his heart.

"Will not see Wei Ying again?" he appealed. With Wei Ying having ascended, they were separated literally by heaven and earth.

"Aiyo, Lan Zhan," Wei Ying huffed with a laugh, cheeks pink. "You'll see me again when you dream."

"Not the same," Lan Wangji said quickly, eyes never leaving his beloved's face.

Wei Ying patted his hand, smile never wavering.

"Lan Zhan, you don't have to worry," he said. "We will have eternity awaiting us. We were fated to ascend together after the fight with the Xuanwu. It was only because we had to win the war that we couldn't then. But I have complete confidence that you can achieve ascension in your lifetime to meet me in heaven."

He touched a reverent Lan Wangji's face, caressing his cheeks and touching the white silk ribbon.

"Besides, you still have A-Yuan to raise to be the perfect Lan, just like you," Wei Ying said.

Then, he leaned forward and kissed Lan Wangji for the first time since he became a god. Lan Wangji clutched desperately at him and Wei Ying let him. When the god finally pulled back, he put his forehead against Lan Wangji's.

"Remember, Lan Zhan. Even if there's an end, there will be a new beginning," Wei Ying whispered. "Today, our meeting ends here. But there will be another and another. Don't lose hope."

"I won't," Lan Wangji promised, swallowing hard to will away the lump in his throat. Wei Ying wouldn't lie to him. He would see the love of his life again. And when he ascends, their

new life together will begin.

When Lan Wangji leaves his seclusion a year later, with his forehead bare of any white silk ribbon, his golden core burns brighter than any living Lans.

*

*

End Chapter 5

Chapter End Notes

(1) Er Zi - son

In the end, this chapter was shorter than I expected. I'm thinking of writing short snippets/extras of WWX's life as a god, especially with our Wangxian being shameless flirts with each other. Please do tell me what you think in the comment section.

And yes, Wei Ying will continue to visit his baby and his boo (in both forms). He just can't stay for too long without pissing off the higher ups (and Wen Qing).

Brothers Reunited

Chapter Summary

Nie Huaisang prays for help and like always, Wei Wuxian tries his best.

Chapter Notes

I repurposed the chapter of Nie Huaisang in the WWX November Mayhem Prompts for this chapter but there are significant changes.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

When Nie Huaisang first heard the rumours about it, he made the executive decision to keep his mouth shut.

Wei-Xiong had always been kind and friendly to him, even going so far as watching over him during their time at Cloud Recesses. Nie Huaisang didn't think that he ever deserved his end. So if there were people elevating him into godhood for the compassion he'd shown them, then that was their business and not his. It certainly wasn't anyone else's business either.

So he kept the knowledge of the growing belief about the God of the Moon and Stars to himself, not even so much as breathe it in the direction of his brother, who was always so adamant about the black and white of the world.

He loved his brother, but he was such a stubborn knucklehead sometimes....most times.

Then, THAT happened and the revelation that his brother had been betrayed by person they had both trusted.

Nie Huaisang was still reeling from his brother's disappearance when he remembered Wei Wuxian. He had always been someone reliable to Nie Huaisang when he needed help and he was always so creative with problem-solving.

But then he wondered if he deserved to ask for help when he did nothing to help Wei-Xiong when he needed it. The former demonic cultivator would probably not have accepted any help from him in anyway nor would Nie Huaisang's words hold any weight in the cultivation world but it would have been the right thing to do then.

Still, it didn't hurt to try and though Nie Huaisang had never been the most religious of believers, he still had a healthy respect for deities.

So he headed all the way to the biggest Temple of the Moon and Stars, right smack in the middle of Yunmeng and gave a generous amount of offerings and funding to the priests and attendants for the privilege of privacy, before kneeling down at the now vacated temple to speak to his former friend.

"Wei-Xiong ah, I know I haven't been much of a friend before, but I really need your help," Nie Huaisang started. "I... I don't know what to do. My brother has disappeared. They claim that he is dead."

Nie Huaisang stopped for a moment, swallowing hard to compose himself. Remembering the last time he saw his brother still hurt. Even when he was crazed and out of his mind from the qi deviation, he still recognised his little brother. Nie Huaisang had seen it in his bloodshot eyes.

It was after, when his brother had disappeared, that he had time to recognise the hate-filled murderous gaze were not directed at him but at the person closest to Nie Huaisang.

"He- we were betrayed," Nie Huaisang admitted aloud. "Now everyone says that he is dead."

For the longest time, his brother was the only family he had left. Nie Mingjue was his father, brother and closest confidante.

Now, he had no one.

He couldn't even trust Er-Ge because of how close he was to Jin Guangyao.

"Wei-xiong, I think my brother is dead," Nie Huaisang sobbed. Even saying it hurts. It didn't feel real. Like it was a horrible nightmare that he would never awaken from. "I'm all alone."

He spent several moments just weeping and trying to compose himself. He was so beside himself with grief that was still so raw that it took him a while to realise that something was not quite right when darkness suddenly enveloped the temple, the interior only illuminated by the candles.

"Jin Guangyao did it. I know he did, but I don't have proof and I don't know how he did it," Nie Huaisang said, scrubbing the tears from his eyes and sniffing. "I don't even know why!? Is it because my brother didn't trust him?"

"I'm such a fool," Nie Huaisang lamented, continuing to sob into his hands. "I should have listened to my brother."

"Wei-xiong, I want to avenge my brother," he said. "But I can't do it alone."

Nie Huaisang paused, and whispered again. "I'm all alone."

He sniffled.

Then he froze when he realised that everything had grown completely silent outside. The background noise of people talking and walking outside was gone, as if cut off abruptly. The

sounds of the chants from the priests in the next hall was also gone. There was just an eerie silence.

Nie Huaisang looked around, partially in alarm and partially in curiosity, noting the darkness outside the windows. He stood up and he walked out the door slowly, cautious on what awaited him.

Water for as far as he could see surrounded the exterior of the temple, which was definitely not how it looked like when he first arrived. The doorway of the temple connected with a wooden pier that led to a pavilion lit with lotus lanterns.

Nie Huaisang cautiously walked out of the temple and onto the pier. Even though it was dark outside, the walkway was well lit by the moon and the twinkling stars so the new Sect Leader could easily navigate the path towards the pavilion.

When he looked back, he was alarmed to see that the temple he had exited had disappeared into the darkness.

For a moment, he dithered, unsure what he was going to do without his only exit.

"Nie Huaisang."

Said person jumped and turned back around to see someone waiting for him at the pavilion.

Wei Wuxian stood before him, in his customary black and red but his robes were more elaborate and luscious than anything the ex-cultivator used to wear. He looked like the Yiling Laozu he once was before his death, but something was different. Nie Huaisang couldn't pinpoint what it was but there was something essentially NOT human about him.

But before Nie Huaisang could decide what it was, Wei Wuxian smiled and said again, "Nie Huaisang."

Just like that, that old feeling of camaraderie returned and his eyes watered. It was quite common for Nie Huaisang to use tears as leverage for his little harmless schemes but this time, it was genuine tears. His life had been turned upside down for the past few weeks and after his brother's supposed death, completely up-ended.

Seeing such a familiar, friendly, reliable face just made all the feelings that he had shoved aside, in favor of investigating the truth behind his brother's death, return and boil over.

"Wei-xiong, my brother. They murdered my brother," he wailed, like the child he once was after their father died and his brother was all he had left. Except this time, he was alone.

Nie Huaisang stumbled into the pavilion, collapsing onto the floor and kowtowing to the deity. "Wei-xiong, please help me." he begged.

A hand landed gently on his head and a calmness flowed through him. He stopped crying and he looked up at his old friend.

"Tell me everything," Wei Wuxian said, looking like a benevolent god with the glowing moon shining brightly behind him. "And we'll go from there."

When Nie Huaisang returned to the temple, the outside was still bright with the evening daylight and the sounds returned immediately the moment he stepped across the threshold.

Wei-Xiong truly was amazing. Even after death, he could still perform such miracles.

After witnessing Fuxing Zushi's powers and knowing what he knew now, Nie Huaisang's tumultuous emotions had become as calm as a still pond and the direction for his future seemed clear and straight.

For the first time in his life, he had a mission with a definite goal.

And with the support of an all-knowing god, he knew that he would succeed.

But first, he would have to set up a new temple in Qinghe.

It would make things so much easier for planning and it would increase Wei-xiong's influence and believers.

By the time he returned, he had it all planned out and budgeted.

The construction of three Temples of the Moon and Stars in the most populated towns in Qinghe started within days after his first visit to Fuxing Zushi.

Three days later, an attack in Koi Tower ended with considerable damage and the death of several disciples.

According to an eyewitness that Nie Huaisang had managed to recruit for his own use, a fierce corpse had broken out from inside Koi Tower before disappearing into the night, proving Wei Wuxian's information about Wen Ning correct. And now that the fierce corpse had escape, Jin Sect (or specifically, Jin Guangshan and Jin Guangyao) would surely be sweating bullets if the other sects find out about the identity of the missing fierce corpse, considering the Jin Sect had lied about destroying Wen Ning.

Nie Huaisang tapped his fan against his lips. Then he turned to right-hand man.

"There's someone that I would like you to find. I think he will make a good attendant for one of the new temples," he said.

"Sect Leader, isn't that the job of the head monk?" his second-in-charge asked in confusion.

"Oh, but Fuxing Zushi himself told me in my dreams that this boy will do well at the temple," said Nie Huaisang dramatically. "You can't expect me to not do what I am told, do you!?"

"Erm, so what is the name of the boy and did the God of the Moon and Stars tell you where I can find him?" asked his long-suffering henchmen.

Nie Huaisang grinned widely.

"Mo Xuanyu. And you can find him in Mo Village."

Wen Ning disappeared with Nie Mingjue slumped on his back as Wei Wuxian watched to ensure that they passed the borders of Koi Tower safely. Even if the cultivators could bring up the arrays to seal them in, it would only take a wave of Wei Wuxian's hand to dismantle it.

After his little meeting with Nie Huaisang, Wei Wuxian had gone on to scry for the whereabouts of Nie Mingjue's soul in the mortal world, thinking that he had become a wandering ghoul or fierce corpse. Instead, he had been shocked to find out that Nie Mingjue was still alive and was sharing the same fate as his Wen Ning.

That was why, after he was allowed to make his first trip to the mortal world, his first destination after the Burial Mounds became Koi Tower instead of Gusu. Time was of essence if he wanted to save Chifeng-zun.

The God of Renewal turned back to the ruined hidden laboratory and watched idly as Xue Yang screamed bloody murder while groping blindly for his sword. Just as the young demonic cultivator touched his sword, Wei Wuxian picked it up and immediately, it evaporated into dust. Wei Wuxian then pointed to a lit candle and the flame burst into an inferno. Everything flammable in close proximity went up in flames within seconds. His old notes, the corpses, the furniture and even Xue Yang, who caught on too late, was consumed within seconds.

The flames didn't touch him but it did follow him as he walked around from cell to cell and room to room, making sure not to miss anything. His presence was enough to flame the fire into levels that would be impossible for anyone to salvage anything. When he returned to the main room, he could see Xue Yang attempting to crawl away, almost charred black but still breathing. The pain of being burned alive must be unbearable now.

Wei Wuxian felt no sympathy as he leaned down to the piteous figure.

Why should he pity this man who had killed indiscriminately and without remorse?

Who had brought so much suffering to everyone, including his innocent shishu and his soulmate?

"Xue Yang," he crooned into the ear of the wicked young man that was receiving karmic justice. "Your suffering has just begun. I'll be seeing you in the afterlife."

Xue Yang screamed intelligibly as the fire continued to consume him.

The God of Destruction and Rebirth watched carefully as everything in that abominable place was destroyed before he left, satisfied. He didn't bother with the rest of Koi Tower even though he was fully capable of annihilating everyone in it. He could, since he knew that Jin Ling was at Lotus Pier at this point in time.

But no, the faults and sins of the human kind cannot to be acknowledged and fixed if they just died. Xue Yang, the little psychopath, was beyond saving and so to prevent further problems, Wei Wuxian had cut off his lifeline. But these Jins deserve a chance to be better, if they had a better sect leader instead of a womanizing, greedy pig or a manipulative, backstabbing snake.

Not all of them deserved to burn.

Wei Wuxian hoped that Jin Ling would be up to improving the Jin sect in the future (with Jiang Cheng's guidance). He knows though, that little Jin Ling was still too young to carry this burden and that the rot runs deep, but Wei Wuxian had always been an optimist. The Jin Sect would have to appoint a more suitable figurehead after Jin Guangshan's death.

If not, they will make a suitable lesson for the others who followed or look to follow in their footsteps.

For now, it was time to return to Burial Mounds to ensure that Wen Ning and Nie Mingjue recover from their ordeals.

After making sure that Wen Ning regained his consciousness and was able to care for a catatonic Nie Mingjue, Wei Wuxian left for GusuLan.

His trip to Gusu had taken a bit more time than he had anticipated but as he was on no set schedule, he indulged a little by spending a day with Lan Zhan and A-Yuan, only showing himself to his two most important people (aside from his nephew and brother). When he felt it was time to leave, Lan Zhan nearly didn't let him go but his beloved was a good man who would never cage him. So, after tying his white cloud-patterned ribbon on his right wrist, Lan Zhan let him leave despite not knowing when they would meet next.

Then, just as he was heading to YunmengJiang, he was called back to his realm by Wen Qing, who was relieved to find out that he had rescued her brother from the clutches of the Jins. Then, the slave driver that she was, she forced him to approve some requests and answer some urgent prayers before allowing him to return to the mortal world to visit his brother.

Much to his dismay, Wei Wuxian found out that another week had passed in the mortal world and he grumbled about the inconvenient inconsistency in time passage between the two worlds as he headed towards his past life's hometown.

Lotus Pier still looked as beautiful as it once was. The nostalgia of it made him nearly teary eyed but he managed to compose himself before his brother could find him in that state.

When he found Jiang Cheng, he was standing at the pier that was a mirror to the one in his own realm. He was carrying a sleeping Jin Ling in his arms and when he turned to see Wei Wuxian, he looked as if he could not believe his eyes.

"Wei Wuxian?" he asked cautiously.

Wei Ying smiled. Jiang Cheng probably thought that this was a dream, except that the sun was shining brightly above them and they were still in Lotus Pier, where the sounds of children playing and the servants chatting could still be heard.

"You came back," his little brother whispered.

"I promised I would," he replied.

Jiang Cheng nodded, tears welling in his eyes.

Wei Wuxian stepped forward, arms held open hesitantly.

Unexpectedly, Jiang Cheng reciprocated, throwing his arm around his brother. Jin Ling was ensconced safely in their arms as the brothers embraced for the first time in years (since that time during the Sunshot Campaign when Jiang Cheng searched for his brother for 3 months, never believing him to be dead).

(He was never dead. His brother will never be dead now.)

For a while, everything was touch and go with Nie Mingjue. His qi deviation had taken a lot out of him and the prolonged torture had only exacerbated his condition.

Wen Ning wished that his sister was here. She was the real healer, not him. She was the more skilled one, the more decisive one.

But Nie Mingjue only had him at the Burial Mounds.

Wei-gon... Lord Wei... Wei-gongzi had gone to visit the others and A-Yuan. Wen Ning had been so happy to hear that A-Yuan was alive but Wei-gongzi had told him that since A-Yuan was sequestered at Gusu, Wen Ning could not follow him.

"It's not safe for a fierce corpse to be there," Wei Wuxian had said. "And I can't take you with me via shadowmancy. It's not design for corporeal passengers."

"But have patience, my friend," the deity continued, patting Wen Ning's shoulder. "You'll have your chance to see our A-Yuan again. He's being taken care of very well by Lan Xichen, so don't worry."

Wen Ning nodded and after watching Wei Wuxian melt into the shadows, he turned back to the comatose Nie Sect Leader. He didn't know how the god had done it but Nie Mingjue was in a healing trance that would allow him to sleep through the worse of his injuries.

In the meantime, Wen Ning was able to forage for medicinal herbs from the overgrown area that used to be Burial Mounds. Some of the plants were rare and top-notch, some he hadn't even seen before except in books. He was able to salvage a pot or two as well from the remnants of the houses that they used to live in. He used it to brew medicinal concoctions that he patiently poured into Nie Mingjue's throat.

It was nearly a fortnight before the man was conscious enough to look at him blearily and croak out, "You..."

Knowing Nie Mingjue was too weak to do anything, Wen Ning just smile uncertainly before Wei Wuxian came into the man's field of vision.

Wei Wuxian had just returned from visiting his brother, totting his signature black flute Chenqing and a happy visage. He had handed Wen Ning new clothes to change into before he woke Nie Mingjue up from his healing coma.

"Nie Mingjue," Wei Wuxian said, a tilted smile on his lips. "Welcome back to the living."

"You.. dead," Nie Mingjue mumbled weakly. Wen Ning fluttered about uncertainly for a moment, unsure of whether he should get his medical concoction and if Nie Mingjue trusted him enough to drink it. Before, Nie Mingjue had been too out of it to realise that it was Wen Ning who was feeding him medicine but now...

"Technically, I'm no longer mortal," Wei Wuxian answered, taking a seat on the flower bed beside the Nie Sect Leader. "And technically, everyone believes that YOU are dead too. So we're even."

"How?" the scowling patient stumbled on the question, voice still hoarse from disuse.

"Ah, that is a long story. So to cut the story short, I'll just tell you this: I ascended," Wei Wuxian said, grinning at the widened eyes of the righteous cultivator. He didn't dislike Nie Mingjue when he was alive. Hell, he had even respected the man for being so stalwart in his belief but it was still gratifying to see the man be proven wrong in condemning Wei Wuxian and the Wen remnants.

"Turns out, everything that Jin Guangshan spouted out about me was wrong," he said, rubbing it in, just a little. "But then again, you've found out first hand yourself how treacherous the Jin Sect members can be, didn't you?"

"Jin... Guang..." Nie Mingjue said but Wei Wuxian cut him off, not caring if he was referring to the son or the father.

"Oh, don't worry about them. Even as we speak, Jin Guangshan is verbally abusing his son, as per the norm. But also because he blames Wen Ning's and your disappearances on him. And Jin Guangyao is planning his father's demise," Wei Wuxian said with a wave of the hand. "That apple really doesn't fall far from the tree, so I'm sure he's planning the most heinous of acts for daddy dearest."

"For now though, your priority is to get better," the deity said. "And once you are well enough and the time is right, you can blow their schemes and conspiracies wide open. I'll even provide you with proof and extra witnesses for you, if you like."

Nie Mingjue grunted, understanding that he was too weak to do more than blink. He can hardly even move his own hand. Recuperating was definitely more important than breaking the skull of that little rat that he called his third sworn brother.

Wei Wuxian reached out to put his hand on Nie Mingjue's forehead. The man went rigid then relaxed when the aches in his body eased and a feeling of drowsiness begin to sweep over him.

"Wen Ning, give him the medicine so it'll help him recover faster," Wei Wuxian instructed. The sentient fierce corpse did as he was told, helping the larger man up to feed the man the bowl of medicine.

"Why?" Nie Mingjue asked in between obediently drinking the bitter concoction. Normally, he would be against taking any drugs from the Yiling Patriarch and his General, but he figured given the person he had trusted had been the one to betray him, his judgement in people were probably not as reliable as he had once thought. Furthermore, if Wei Wuxian had wanted to harm or kill him, he would have done so while he was unconscious or out of his mind.

"Hm? Because your brother prayed for my help in my temple," Wei Wuxian answered. "And I always try my best for my worshippers."

"Huai...sang," Nie Mingjue said hoarsely.

"He's fine," Wei Wuxian said quickly. He understood the worry of an older brother so assuaging Nie Mingjue came naturally. "Jin Guangyao and Jin Guangshan severely underestimate him so they are not bothering with him. But I can assure you that Huaisang is not as soft as you always make him out to be."

Nie Mingjue glared at him weakly. He knew. Of course he knew that his brother is not as soft and weak as most people thought. His brother could achieve great things if he put his mind to it.

The fact that he managed to recruit the help of a god was indication enough.

Wei Wuxian's smile tilted wryly. "He's building me three new temples in Qinghe with a fourth one in the planning. So of course I'm going to help save his dage if I can."

By this point, Wen Ning had finished feeding Nie Mingjue the medicine. The fierce corpse retrieved the clothes that Wei Wuxian had also bundled along with his own. He helped the bed-ridden man out of his soiled rags and into the clean soft robes.

Wei Wuxian approached the fatigued, injured man and patted the man's shoulder.

"You will feel better when you wake up from your healing sleep," the deity said, before putting his hand on Nie Mingjue's head again. "And your little brother will be here to see you."

Nie Mingjue's vision darken and though he wouldn't have trusted the black-clad god's words back then when he was alive, for some reason, he felt calm and he welcomed the oblivion that came after.

Nie Huaisang had thought that with Wei Wuxian's help, he would get revenge for his brother's death. He didn't expect anything more than that.

But then, a few weeks after their initial meeting in Fuxing Zushi's realm, he received a visitor quite suddenly in his office while brooding into his wine, making him jump and spilled his cup. It was dark and his door was sealed tight from interlopers, so he hadn't expected a godly figure to just melt out of the shadows to appear before his table so suddenly.

"Wei-xiong!"

"Huaisang," Wei Wuxian said, his little smirk indicating his enjoyment of Nie Huaisang's surprise.

"Fuxing Zushi, you made my heart jump out of my chest!" Nie Huaisang whined, putting a hand on said chest.

"You'll be fine," the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal said, waving a hand. "Just like your brother."

Nie Huaisang froze, staring up at the black-clad god.

"What...?" he asked, not believing his ears.

"Wen Ning has been taking care of Nie Mingjue since they broke out of Koi Tower," Wei Wuxian said, in lieu of a better explanation. "He's getting better and has waken once before."

Though he can't do much right now."

He grinned at the hopeful and shocked face of his former classmate.

"I thought you'd like to go with me to the Burial Mounds to see him."

Wen Ning and Wei Wuxian had an unspoken agreement to vacate the demon-slaughtering cave the moment the two brothers embraced and cried over their reunion (or rather, Nie Huaisang cried and screamed at his bed-ridden brother, who was still too weak to retaliate more than a grunt or two.)

"Wen Ning, now I know I wanted you to stay here to take care of Nie Mingjue," Wei Wuxian said as the two of them sat outside the cave. "But after this, do you want to join your sister and the other Wen remnants in the afterlife?"

"What about A-Yuan?" asked Wen Ning, eyes wide.

"He has been taken in by Lan Zhan as his son, so no one knows of his origin. Not even Lan Xichen," Wei Wuxian answered. "It's better this way. A-Yuan will have a good life as a young master of a major sect and the support of Hanguang-jun behind him."

Wen Ning looked down, shoulders slumping and seeing his glum visage, Wei Wuxian patted his shoulder.

"He doesn't remember living in the Burial Mounds but we see him regularly in his dreams," Wei Wuxian consoled him. "He's a good boy and he will grow up to be an excellent cultivator with a good heart."

Wen Ning nodded slowly, finding much solace in those words. Wei-gongzi was right. It was better this way. Let A-Yuan have a good life without remembering hunger and the feeling of being hunted.

"I'm not forcing you to choose anything right now, Wen Ning," Wei Wuxian said, continuing their previous topic. "I'm just letting you know that this is an option."

"Alternatively, if you are unsure about joining the afterlife, you can stay here," Wei Wuxian said, gesturing to what used to be Burial Mounds. "Huaisang can convert this place into another temple or a sanctuary for you and all those who need a safe place."

Wen Ning was quiet for a while before he answered, "Wei-gongzi... it's not that I'm afraid of the afterlife. But I would like to remain a little while longer. See A-Yuan. Keep your place of worship safe and take care of it."

Wei Wuxian smiled and patted his shoulder again. Wen Ning was struck with the feeling that he had anticipated the answer and so, had offered the sanctuary as a choice. Wei-gongzi seemed to have matured well over his years, even more so than as the Yilling Laozu that had fought and won the Sunshot Campaign.

"Well, then," Wei Wuxian said. "I will entrust you with Nie Mingjue and someone else that I will send here."

Wen Ning blinked. "Who?"

Wei Wuxian smiled.

"Xiao Xingchen."

*

*

End Chapter 6

Chapter End Notes

Next up can be either Mo Xuanyu or Xiao Xingchen.

Of Conviction & Devotion

Chapter Summary

Mo Xuanyu has never known kindness and gentleness all his life, apart from his mother's love. So when a god reaches out to offer him food, safety and respect, Mo Xuanyu vows that he will only ever serve Wei Wuxian.

Chapter Notes

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

My last update for 2021 hahaha! What a wild ride of a year! Let's hope next year is better ^____^

Here's Mo Xuanyu's p.o.v. since everyone has voted for him.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Mo Xuanyu was being beaten by his cousin when the servant came rushing into the room to stop Mo Ziyuan.

"Young master! Your mother is calling for you. Some people from a cultivation sect has come!"

Mo Ziyuan immediately perked up, the child having delusions of being a talented cultivator after being bolstered and coddled by his mother his entire life. Meanwhile, Mo Xuanyu, who was lying on the floor with his arms around his head, felt his heart jerk in hope.

Did his father come for him?

Will he take his mother and him away now?

From this hellhole that continuously mistreated his mother and him.

Just as that thought came, Mo Xuanyu felt a jarring kick to his side.

"Don't you dare show your face!" Mo Ziyuan shouted. "You'll just embarrass everyone."

After the abusive jerk disappeared to go hound the cultivators, Mo Xuanyu sobbed, trying to pull himself up so that he could go to his mother. She was the only one that would ever care for him.

Well, her and Lord Wei.

Mo Xuanyu had stumbled upon the small shrine of the god on a pathway usually travelled by merchants and vendors. He'd watched as some merchants left offerings to pray for a safe journey. When they left, he went to retrieve the offerings, all the while apologising and kowtowing to the god. His mother and he had not eaten for days after his aunt found some imaginary fault in his mother's work and he was starving.

"Please forgive me," he wept as he retrieved the fruits, wrapping them up in his robes that were more like rags than anything resembling clothes. When the food was secured, he ran quickly back home, back to the woodshed that he and his mother lived in. He managed to avoid the other servants, who would have beaten him up if they found him smuggling food and his cousin who was looking for someone to bully.

His mother was so starved that she did not question where her Xuanyu obtained the food from. She ate them hungrily after making sure that her baby boy had his fair share of food. Then, she went back to work before her half sister started screaming about her being lazy.

Mo Xuanyu, his belly now satisfied with the small amount of food that he was able to steal, fell asleep in his hay, curling his malnourished 13-year-old body into a small ball.

In his dream, he saw a beautiful young man who stood in a pavilion watching him with a curious gleam in his eyes.

"How odd," the dream-like young man said. "It seems you and I are somewhat interconnected. Hmm. Perhaps in another world..."

He shook his head, as if trying to clear cobwebs from his mind. Then he slowly approached the fearful-looking boy who became aware that he had no where to run or hide, since there was only water all around them.

"What is your name, child?" the tall figure asked, leaning down to the teen.

Mo Xuanyu, awed by the man's beauty and aura, swallowed and answered in a small, hesitant voice, "Mo. Mo Xuanyu..."

"Mo-gongzi, why were you stealing food from my shrine?" the black-clad god asked lightly, not at all angry or offended, but Mo Xuanyu collapsed onto the floor to kowtow to the deity, apologising profusely for his transgression. Tears and snot dripped from his eyes and nose as he trembled in fear.

Fuxing Zushi sighed, feeling like a bully even though he did nothing but ask an innocent question.

"Mo-gongzi, I'm not angry, I'm just curious," the deity stated. "Please stand up."

Mo Xuanyu sniffled as he rubbed at his face, still kneeling at the feet of the god whose offerings he had stolen.

"Get up, Mo Xuanyu," the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal said firmly and the boy quickly jumped up to his feet.

"Yes, sir," Mo Xuanyu answered quickly, head down.

Fuxing Zushi patted his head gently, ignoring the way the teen flinched initially. After a moment of hesitation, Mo Xuanyu lifted his eyes and stared at the god, who smiled down at him gently and benevolently.

"There now. There's no reason to cry," the god said. "It is just offering that will rot away with time so I'm not angry about that. I'm just curious as to why you would do that."

"My mother... My mother and I haven't eaten for days," Mo Xuanyu admitted. "I was so hungry. My mother fainted this morning but she still had to work. I'm really sorry. But I was... I was just so hungry."

The god clicked his tongue when tears started falling from Mo Xuanyu's wide brown eyes again. He pulled out a white handkerchief and dabbed it on the young boy's face before putting it in his hand.

"Well, if you ever need food, you can always get it at my shrine," Fuxing Zushi said. "It's not like I eat them. Just stop by and tell me how your day went before you take them. That way, I know it is you and that you are okay."

Then, he patted Mo Xuanyu in the head again, a welcoming smile on his lips.

It was in that moment that Mo Xuanyu, who had never in all his life known such kindness and gentleness from anyone other than his mother, knew that he would serve no one but Fuxing Zushi, the ex-Yiling Laozu Wei Wuxian, for the rest of his life.

Now, most people would think that they were dreaming of meeting a god upon waking up from sleep. But Mo Xuanyu woke up with a pristine white silk handkerchief in his hand, something that he never had before. It was too nice and too beautiful. His aunt would never have let him own something like it.

Taking it as a sign that his dreams were real, Mo Xuanyu kept the kerchief on his person, close to his heart.

Mo Xuanyu seldom met with his god. He had never seen him in person, only in blurry dreams where the heavenly patriarch would tell him messages to relay in the mortal world.

He couldn't leave Mo Village, not when he was just teen and with his mother being so worried for him. So Fuxing Zushi would just ask him to convey simple messages.

The first time it happened, he went to the farmer and timidly told him to evacuate his family as there will be a landslide behind his house that night. Poor Mo Xuanyu was laughed at by the farmer and his wife, who later chased him away with a hoe, claiming that he was cursing them with his presence. It was the same with anyone else the boy tried to warn. No one listened to him and some even spat at him and called him crazy.

Sure enough, just as Fuxing Zushi predicted, there was a thunderstorm that night and the landslide happened, swallowing a few houses, including the farmer and his family that had threatened Mo Xuanyu.

The second time happened a mere day later as he tried to warn the villagers of an incoming flood as the rain continued from night to day.

Given that he was right with his first warning, one would think that the villagers would admit their faults and treat him like the mouthpiece of a god. Instead, they called him a harbinger of bad news and tried to stone him. He only escaped their wrath because of the slippery mud that made several of the villagers chasing after him fall, face first.

After crying himself to sleep in the safety of the woodshed, he fell into his dreams to be met with a regretful-looking Fuxing Zushi.

"My poor Xuanyu," Lord Wei said, patting his bruised cheeks gently. "Terrible people. I'll make them regret it."

Mo Xuanyu blinked away tears and wrapped his arms around his god's waist, seeking whatever comfort that he could. Lord Wei patted his head soothingly as his dreams faded into resting slumber.

The next day, the flood happened, sweeping across the village and killing the livestock.

Mo Xuanyu was fearful that the villagers would gang up to kill him and his mother after the flood subsided. But they didn't. Instead, they skittered away from him fearfully as if he was ridden with the plague.

Truthfully, this was preferable to the way they had treated him before so he didn't complain or say anything.

However, his cousin only took this as sign of his apparent worthlessness, beating him up and calling him all sorts of name for being a blight in their family.

Of course, Lord Wei never agreed with any of the vitriol spat his way.

"Hmph, it wasn't my Xuanyu's fault his father couldn't keep his dick in," Fuxing Zushi said, throwing some fish food into the water where several bioluminescent koi fish swam. The stars' reflection rippled when the koi fish swam up to nibble at the food.

"Don't believe them, Xuanyu," Wei Wuxian said with a bright smile. "You are worth much more than any of them."

Mo Xuanyu wanted to believe his god's words. He wanted to believe them so badly but he had been told his entire life of his worthlessness so he merely nodded meekly.

Fuxing Zushi patted him on the head.

"Don't worry, Xuanyu. Change is the one inevitable factor in life. Your situation will change for the better."

Mo Xuanyu woke up from the beating that his cousin gave him when a group of servant slammed the door of the woodshed open and dragged him out forcibly into the receiving hall, where he was thrown at the feet of a group of cultivators dressed smartly in green and grey.

"What have you done!? You worthless sniveling child!" Madam Mo sneered hideously.
"These honorable cultivators named you personally!"

"Madam!" one of the cultivators said firmly, cutting her tirade off. Evidently the leader of the group, he reached out to pull Mo Xuanyu to his feet.

"Are you alright, Mo-ergongzi?" the man asked, looking concerned at the emancipated form of the child, dressed in rags and bruised in both cheeks. A dawning understand came upon him as he watched the child skittishly made his way to one of the young maids who shared passing resemblance to him.

Was this the reason his Sect Leader had sent him off to fetch the boy so urgently?

"Mo-ergongzi, we are from QingheNie. I am Nie Fangzhao," he bowed to the child, who looked alarmed at the gesture of respect. "My Sect Leader sent me to retrieve you under the instructions of Fuxing Zushi."

Mo Xuanyu's eyes widened as he gasped in surprise.

"Lord Wei sent you?" the boy asked in wonder. "He sent you to save me and my mother?"

"Yes," the Nie cultivator answered with a small smile.

"Wait," Mo Xuanyu's mother said, looking confused at the turn of events. "His father didn't send you? But A-Shan said that he will come for our child."

"Oh, and who is his father?" Nie Fangzhao asked, inspecting Mo Xuanyu's features and then the young mother's.

"He's the Sect Leader of LanlingJin," said the woman, looking as if she was proud of being one of the flings of a well-known lecher.

Nie Huaisang's second-in-charge grimaced at her answer, which alarmed Mo Xuanyu and his mother.

"When was the last time Sect Leader Jin came to visit?" asked Nie Fangzhao.

"He... he hasn't.." Mo Xuanyu's mother stammered.

"Honored cultivator, that man hasn't come for years!" crowed Madam Mo, relishing in the shame on her half-sister's face. "He has jilted her!"

Mo Xuanyu's mother tried to protest against the statement but whatever she wanted to say was interrupted by Nie Fangzhao.

"Ah. That explains everything," commented the Nie group leader.

"Why? What do you mean by that!?" asked Mo Xuanyu's mother desperately.

"If Sect Leader Jin said he would come for Mo-ergongzi, he would have come by now," said Nie Fangzhao. "But the fact that he hasn't is indication enough."

"Do you truly think that you are the only woman he keeps on the side?" quipped one of the other Nie cultivators. "Sect Leader Jin Guangshan is already married and is well known for having flings everywhere."

"What!? No! He said... he said he would come back!" Mo Xuanyu's mother wailed. "Lies. It's all lies."

Watching her cry into her hands as hopelessness overwhelmed her, Mo Xuanyu came to a decision. His father may not want him but Lord Wei sent people for him. The kindly, beautiful god who held him as he cried, who allowed him to take food his followers offered him and most of all, gave him hope for a better life, was now offering safety for him and his mother.

"I'll go with you," he announced to the Nie cultivators.

"Xuanyu!" his mother exclaimed, grasping his hand desperately.

"Niang, I don't want to stay here anymore," he said to her honestly. "And I don't want to wait for an absent father."

"But he promised! He will come-"

"If Lord Wei wants me to serve him, then it is an honour of the highest degree to me!" he announced, spoken loud and clear with a strong determination for the first time in his life.

"Mother, come with me and suffer no more here," Mo Xuanyu said to his mother. "Wait no more for a man that repeatedly abandons you."

His mother sniffled, staring with renewed eyes at her son, who for the first time in his life stood tall and proud. Then she nodded, convinced by his firm words. She got up from the floor to hold his hand. "Niang will follow Xuanyu wherever he wants to go."

"Good," the Nie group leader said. "As the temples are still under construction, you will be housed at the Unclean Realm to be taught cultivation. After that, you will be learning under the Head Monk so that in the future you can manage of all the Temples of the Moon and Stars in Qinghe."

Honor of the highest degree indeed.

What was arranged for Mo Xuanyu was more than a mere place in a cultivation sect (like his flighty father would have offered). No, he was being offered the chance to receive the education of a cultivator AND the position of the highest respect in the Temples, instead of just an acolyte that the Mo family had first thought.

Looking overwhelmed but still determined, Mo Xuanyu nodded. "Understood."

"You can pack all your things first," Nie Fangzhao said, but Mo Xuanyu shook his head.

"We don't have anything we want to take," he answered. It was true. Neither he nor his mother had anything of value. It had all been taken away when there seem to be no sign of his father ever returning for him. His most important person in his life was also going with him, so he had nothing left in this forsaken house. "We can leave now."

"What!? You can't just leave like that!" Mo Ziyuan exclaimed, he turned to Madam Mo. "But they are just servants! Niang! You can't just let him leave! What about me!?"

"Excuse me?" said Nie Fangzhao in disbelief. He too turned to Madam Mo. "She's your half-sister, isn't she? Do you often enslave your family members? Imprison them?"

"Well, no. But she-" the woman stammered, trying to shush her son and placate the cultivator at the same time.

"It is Fuxing Zushi's wish for us to bring Mo Xuanyu and his mother to Qinghe," the man said firmly, gesturing to the heavens respectfully. "Do you want to offend The God of the Moon and Stars?"

"No! No! But- But- Are you sure you did not hear the wrong name?" Madam Mo said, desperately.

The Nie cultivator just gave her a stern look as if to say, 'Are you calling me incompetent?'"

"Fuxing Zushi himself came to Sect Leader Nie in his dream to appoint Mo Xuanyu as his acolyte to be trained as his Head Priest in the future," Nie Fangzhao announced aloud. The volume of it ensured that the rest of the villagers who were brownnosing around heard every word.

"Do not interfere in higher powers unless you want to be made into an example," said the man, before leading the mother and son away.

As they were walking out the door, the villagers that had mocked, hit and cursed at Mo Xuanyu knelt down and prayed in apology for their wrongdoings towards him. It was clear that they were doing it out of fear of the god whose protection he was under, instead of true repentance.

Mo Xuanyu recoiled from their touch out of disgust but also felt vindicated for the way that the villagers had treated him. So, with his mother's hand in his, he walked out of his abusive aunt's home with his head held high.

Ever since Mo Xuanyu and his mother was taken away by the cultivators so that the child could become the chosen acolyte to the Temple of the Moon and Stars, the Mo village started thriving.

At first, the Mo family took it as a sign that the unwanted child was a star of misfortune that hindered their progress for years. Madam Mo took every chance she could to extol the greatness of her son while disparaging the child of her half-sister in equal measure. Even more so than usual, as if to make up for the fact that her son was overlooked by the God of Renewal in favor of a bastard child. Mo Ziyuan spat every time someone mentioned his cousin's name, saying that they were well rid of the pest and his mother. Master Mo too would curse the boy's name whenever he lost a bet. Even the household was in on it, blaming the boy for every bad thing that had befallen them for the past years.

Then, things started dying inexplicably in the Manor.

It started with the fishes in their ponds and the grass around their manor. Then, the shrubs and the trees started turning brown and brittle. And every piece of meat that was brought into the house for meals turned rancid just as it was served on the table.

After that, the family members and the household staff started stinking like rotting corpses. They couldn't figure out why and even after several baths and severe scrubbing, the smell

remained. It came to the point that none of the villagers wanted to go near them, fearing that they had offended Fuxing Zushi with their well-known abuse of their own second master.

And no matter what they did, they could not get rid of the stink.

Worse still was when Mo Ziyuan started having severe bad luck. No matter where he went, birds dropped shit on his head. He would slip on every puddle of water and step on every dogshit in the streets. Even when he was cautious about his every step, some other misfortune would befall him, like a tree branch falling on him or someone accidentally throwing foot bath water on him through the window.

No physicians could (or would) help them with their severe body odor and Madam Mo even had to go so far as to beg for consultation with a famed fortune-teller to ask him what was going on.

The fortune-teller took one look at all of them, with two fingers pinching his nose, and told them that the reason all these things were happening was because they had offended a great deity.

Upon seeing them exchange looks of horror, he said that the only way to undo their mistake was to make an offering and give an apology to the god.

"That cannot be, we have done nothing wrong!" Madam Mo claimed, but behind her all the household members started whispering about Mo Xuanyu.

"It must be him! He cursed us," they cried.

"That's true! It must that little bastard that did this!" Mo Ziyuan jumped on that assumption.

The fortune-teller gave them all looks of disbelief.

"Unless this Mo Xuanyu is a god, I don't think that is possible," the man said, "Either way, the only method to undo this is to seek forgiveness."

So, after another week of suffering in which Mo Ziyuan fell into a ditch full of cow manure for close to an hour before anyone found him and reluctantly fished him out, the whole Mo Manor packed up their best clothes and offerings to go to the newly built Temple of the Moon and Stars in Qinghe to ask for forgiveness.

Unfortunately, the monks at the temple denied their entrance at the front gate due to their nose-curdling stench.

"We are here to make an offering!" Madam Mo complained, half demanding, half pleading, clearly at her wits end.

"We cannot allow anyone to disturb other worshippers and your state of uncleanness will distract them," said the head monk.

"It's okay, Master Li," a voice called out, gentle and melodic. "Lord Wei already told me that they are here to apologise."

Mo Xuanyu, dressed in the rich red robes lined with black that the acolytes of the god wore, came walking down the temple steps, looking expectant. He stopped a distance away, wrinkling his delicate nose to show his disgust at their stench.

The head monk nodded and moved on with the others, trusting the young acolyte who was the patron god's appointed messenger.

"Mo Xuanyu!" Mo Ziyuan exclaimed, looking mulish at seeing his cousin faring so well. "Did you curse us!?"

The other boy just rolled his eyes, looking unconcerned with the hostility from his ex-communicated family.

"Why would I want to waste time thinking about any of you?" Mo Xuanyu said. "Lord Wei teaches letting go of burdens in the world."

No need to say who were the burdens in the young boy's life. Or previous life. Because that life was no more as far as Mo Xuanyu was concerned. His mother and he was happy now and the rest of the Mo family can rot for all he cared.

Mo Ziyuan opened his mouth to spew more vitriol but was cut off by Mo Xuanyu.

"I would suggest that you show a little decorum and respect while you are here," Mo Xuanyu advised. Then he emphasized, "To everyone."

The young acolyte smiled, teeth bared threateningly. "Unless you want to be hit by lightning."

That stopped whatever tirade that was forthcoming from the Mo family. Instead, Madam Mo simpered towards the boy.

"Xuanyu, surely the God of Moon and Stars would not be so cruel," she said, approaching the acolyte who sneered at her and avoided her touch.

"I don't know if you are aware of this but Lord Wei used to be Yiling Laozu. He WOULD be cruel to the deserving," the boy stated sardonically.

"We-We are just here to give offerings," she appealed, indicating Ah Tong and the rest of the servants bearing gifts and fruits.

"If you hope to reverse your luck, you will have to make amends sincerely," said Mo Xuanyu, unimpressed. "You are welcome to try but I doubt that it would work, considering your earlier attitude."

Mo Ziyuan bristled but his father patted his shoulder to calm him down. In the meantime, Mo Xuanyu had already turned away from them to head to up the main hall where a large painting of the God of Moon and Stars hung. They followed after, looking around the lavishly but tastefully decorated temple.

The other worshippers wrinkled their nose at them and quickly left, unable to take the smell. Mo Xuanyu burnt some strong sandalwood incense in hopes that the smell would not stick to any furnishings. Then he offered the incense sticks to the supplicants, reminding them to pray sincerely.

Madam Mo and her husband wasted no time bowing and offering gifts. Mo Ziyuan only reluctantly knelt down to loudly (and falsely) proclaim his apology, bowing when his parents did. The other household staff that were suffering from the same ailment did the same.

Mo Xuanyu watched them bow repeatedly to a silent god and shook his head. They were obviously not doing enough to impress Lord Wei if they couldn't even apologise sincerely for being terrible people. With a sigh, he lit a lotus candle at the altar and started saying out loud to the painting.

"Master, the people who offended you are here," he said. "Will you not show yourself?"

Wei Wuxian remained still in his painting, dispassionately staring down at the supplicants with red eyes. There was no sign that the deity even heard any of the prayers.

"Master, please be merciful to your believers," he tried again. "They will repent and work harder to be better lest you punish them again."

After saying those words, he turned to glare at the Mo family and their household staff, daring them to say otherwise. He could see Mo Ziyuan's face turn mottled red and prepared himself for another blow up from the spoilt brat.

Just then, a wind blew from the doorway, removing the stench of rotting corpses from the cursed Mo household and the fragrant smell of lotus slowly filled the hall.

"Huh," Mo Xuanyu said. "Looks like you're in luck. Lord Wei is in a good mood today. You are all forgiven."

Madam Mo and her husband looked relieved while the household staff started sniffing themselves, then cheering and giving thanks to the still silent god.

"Well, all except that pig over there," said Mo Xuanyu pointing to the still red-faced Mo Ziyuan. "Looks like Lord Wei judged that you are not sincere."

Mo Ziyuan opened his mouth and squealed. He slapped his hands on his mouth, then his eyes crossed when he realised his nose had turned into a pig's snout. Seeing that, Madam Mo shrieked, loud enough to bring the head monk running into the main hall again.

"Madam! You are disrupting prayers!" the head monk said. Then, he paused at the sight of Mo Ziyuan's nose. "Have you offended Lord Wei!?"

"He did," Mo Xuanyu answered before Madam Mo could blame him. "And he can only break the curse if he does a 49-day fasting and praying session."

"How-how would you know!? Were you the one who cursed him!?!?" Madam Mo shrieked again.

"Because that's what Lord Wei told me," Mo Xuanyu said, looking impassively at her. It was a far cry of how he use to cower in front of her.

"Why would he even bother with you!?" his ostensible aunt cried out. "Why would he do this to my sweet A-Yuan."

Mo Xuanyu wanted to gag at that. Mo Ziyuan was the furthest thing from sweet, given what a nasty, petty, vile bully he was.

"Young Mo Xuanyu was chosen by Lord Wei himself!" exclaimed the head monk in indignation on behalf of the acolyte. "Sect Leader Nie was called upon in a dream by Lord Wei to build this temple and to recruit Young Master Mo as his mouthpiece."

"You will have care to treat him with respect and reverence!" the head monk scolded vehemently.

"Master Li, there is no point wasting your breath lecturing the unrepentant," Mo Xuanyu said. Then, he turned to Mo Ziyuan. "By fasting, it means you are not allowed any food that has any meat in it. You have to do cleansing everyday with no whining or complaining, and you have to be completely repentant as you pray."

"Or you start all over again. For another 49 consecutive days," he concluded with a wry smile. "Good luck."

"You! You! You're a demon!" Madam Mo shrieked as her son squealed in horror (like a pig on the chopping board). "What kind of temple is this!?"

"Madam!" scolded the head monk. "Control yourself."

"Careful," said Mo Xuanyu, inspecting his fingernails. "You were just cured of the stink curse. Do you want to join your son to be a pig?"

That shut her up real quick.

"Look. It's easy. You just keep him from eating meat for 49 days, make sure he bathes daily and pray at least an hour a day to reflect on himself," Mo Xuanyu said in exasperation, done with his exhausting ex-family. "As long as he is repentant, it may not even last the full period."

"So, as long as A-Yuan is repentant, he will be alright?" Mo Ziyuan's father asked, looking pale and scared at having offended an all-powerful deity.

"If he is, Lord Wei will surely be merciful," the head monk answered instead.

"Yes, now run along before you offend Master again," Mo Xuanyu said, shooving them away. "Oh, and next time, try not to badmouth people. It's a very bad habit."

Their faces pale and shocked at having been caught slandering Mo Xuanyu, the household staff quickly disappeared into the doorway while the Mo family cried and wailed as they walked away with their squealing and oinking son.

Just the sight of it made Mo Xuanyu smug all day. Master Li, the head monk just sighed and shook his head every time he looked at him, though there was a little tilt of amusement on the old man's lips.

That night, Mo Xuanyu sat in the empty main hall listening to distant sounds of water lapping against the pier and grinned.

"Master, thank you for the act of vengeance," he said, bowing to the handsome painting of Wei Wuxian.

When Mo Xuanyu looked up, his surroundings had turned into a pavilion lit with moonlight.

*

*

End Chapter 6

Chapter End Notes

Yup. MXY n WWX has a sort of connection that allows them both to communicate with each other easier than any other ppl. WY can bring MXY's consciousness easily into his realm. (Don't tell LZ, he'd be so jealous lol)

Dunno if anyone has caught on to how WY's influence is spreading so fast. At first, it is via protection of homes (via his 'pictures' on their doors), then protection of travelling routes from dark creatures. Merchants and travelers are setting up small shrines as they travel from place to place to pray for protection. They also bring stories of his miracles around from places to places. Slowly, but surely, his belief is spreading amongst the common people by the title of Fuxing Zushi, unbeknownst to most cultivators.

P.S. My hubby is currently watching the Untamed and I get homicidal urges whenever I see JGS's face on the screen. Ugh. Makes me wanna give him the worse death ever.

Meeting in a Dream

Chapter Summary

Xiao Xingchen is running away from his soulmate. It takes a god to intervene.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After Xiao Xingchen left his master's mountain for the second time, wandering sightless without his soulmate, he came across a young orphaned girl who made a living pickpocketing.

Or rather, stumbled across her when she targeted him as one of her victims.

Then he saved her from an unruly man who wanted to take advantage of her and she had decided to stay with him from then on. Xiao Xingchen, lonely now after travelling for so long with Song Lan, welcomed her bright presence in his life.

"Daozhang," she chirped. "There's a small temple up in front! Maybe we can ask for a place to stay tonight."

"Mn," he agreed with a gentle smile and allowed her to lead him over the bridge to said temple. It was a small place, smelling of lotus flowers and situated over a pond.

There was no caretaker around, though the place seemed clean enough, according to A-Qing. Xiao Xingchen himself smelled little dust and the furnishing felt relative new.

"A-Qing," Xiao Xingchen called out, feeling around at the altar before finding the incense that they kept for worshippers. "Come to the altar and pay respect to the master of the temple first."

A-Qing grumbled a little, being young and inexperienced. But she did as she was told, lighting an incense for the painting of the beautiful god at the altar.

"Master of the house, please let us stay for the night," she proclaimed before kowtowing, her words callous but her intent pure.

Xiao Xingchen shook his head before tracing the carved plaque at the altar to find out who was the god presiding in the temple.

Fuxing Zushi... The Venerable Patriarch of Renewal.

This must be a new god as he had never heard of this god before. He knew that they were in the outskirts of Yunmeng, on the pathway of the silk merchants travelling towards Qinghe. Perhaps it is one of their patron god as he'd heard that this area was prone to floods during the rainy season in summers. Fortunately for them, it was mid autumn now and though the days were humid, the nights were relatively cool.

Xiao Xingchen sat down on the floor beside A-Qing, who handed him a bun they had purchased earlier for dinner.

The evening was quiet and cool so it didn't take long for them both to settle down after their meal to fall asleep.

When Xiao Xingchen woke up, he could hear the sounds of water and the gentle playing of a dizi. Then, the song trailed off and a voice called out in a light tone.

"Xiao-shishu, won't you open your eyes?"

Shishu?

Xiao Xingchen reflexively opened his eyes at the title. Normally, behind the white bandage, it wouldn't have mattered if he did so. Everything would have been black for him anyway. But, instead of inky blackness, the luminous full moon greeted him.

"What is this?" Xiao Xingchen asked in confusion, blinking in disbelief. He sat up, looking around the pavilion he was in. Standing at the opposite of the pavilion was the musician, who twirled his black flute, watching him with a warm smile.

"Your dream," the musician answered. "You weren't born blind, were you? Of course you would have visual dreams."

Xiao Xingchen got up, turning around in a circle to look around the dark world they were in. They were in a pavilion well lit by the moon and several floating lotus lanterns.

"This... this is a very odd dream to have," Xiao Xingchen said cautiously, turning back to the musician, who was now sitting at the table pouring tea for the both of them. "Do I know you?"

"Well, no," the only other occupant in this quiet world said. "But I know you. You are a disciple of Baoshan Sanren, who is my mother's master. So that makes you my shishu."

"Your mother...?" Xiao Xingchen asked, sitting down at the table to accept a cup of tea from the musician.

"Cangse Sanren was my mother," the black-clad man answered, then he introduced himself. "I am Wei Ying, courtesy name Wei Wuxian. Also known as Yiling Laozu. Or at least, I used to be."

"The Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation?" Xiao Xingchen said, remembering the rumours about his shijie's son that greeted him when he first descended his master's mountain.

"Grandmaster," the young man snorted. "That makes me sound so old. I was only twenty when I died, you know. Younger when I 'mastered' resentful energy."

"Twenty..." Xiao Xingchen parroted in shock. He knew that his martial nephew was younger than him when he died but the reality of it didn't hit him until now. "Only twenty...."

"Ah, shishu, don't despair for me, death has treated me more kindly than in life," Wei Wuxian comforted him instead.

This was completely unlike what he had expected Yiling Laozu to be like. Rumours had it that he was a cruel, blood-thirsty heretic that sacrificed children and women alike. But this smiling young man who spoke so politely and so kindly was far from the picture of the crazed demonic cultivator that people had painted him out to be.

"But...", Xiao Xingchen looked around again. "Why are we here?"

"Ah, this is my realm, we are in between time and space. I pulled you here in your dreams because I wanted to meet you," Wei Wuxian explained.

"Pulled me ...into your realm..?" Xiao Xingchen asked in confusion.

"My realm," reiterated Wei Wuxian with a nod. "I apologise. Let me re-introduce myself. I used to be Yiling Laozu, but now I am Fuxing Zushi, the God of the Moon and Stars."

"You are the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal," Xiao Xingchen repeated, eyes wide with disbelief. The grandmaster of demonic cultivator... now a god? There really was something very wrong with the rumours that had circulated about his martial nephew.

"Yes, I was shocked too when I woke up here," Wei Wuxian answered truthfully. "But apparently, my continuous return to life despite harrowing experiences clinched my designation upon my third ascension."

When Xiao Xingchen continued to wait for his explanation, Wei Ying said with a sheepish smile, "I was killed several times but I persisted in returning to finish the war. Heavenly management was quite annoyed with me for finding ways to return without their approval. (1)"

"From what I heard, if you did not return, the Sunshot Campaign would not have been successful," Xiao Xingchen commented. So the sects were quite fortunate that he did so, but Xiao Xingchen did not mention that.

He didn't need to. Despite all the inaccurate rumours that had been spreading around about the Yiling Laozu, that was the one rumour that seemed to be the most truthful, even to an outsider like him. The large sects can boast all they want about their contributions but even to the commoners, it was quite apparent who the lynchpin was to the victory of the Sunshot Campaign.

"That's over and done with," Wei Wuxian said, waving his hand dismissively. "I've done my part and accepted the consequences of my actions."

It was clear that the past was not something that Wei Wuxian was eager to discuss nor was he concerned with, which Xiao Xingchen approved of since he had seemingly ascended from a life full of strife.

"Then, what has Fuxing Zushi summoned me for?" Xiao Xingchen asked formally.

"Xiao-shishu, you don't have to call me that," Wei Wuxian replied casually. "Here, we can be as informal as possible."

Xiao Xingchen didn't know how to answer that since they were more like strangers than real martial uncle and nephew, so he just nodded obligingly.

Now then," Wei Wuxian said, going straight to the point. "Why are you running away from Song Zichen?"

Xiao Xingchen's mouth dropped open but no words came out as he floundered in shock.

"Song Lan prayed to me," Fuxing Zushi explained. "One of my shrines toppled over during a thunderstorm and he kindly took the time to set it right. Then he prayed to me in hopes of finding you."

Xiao Xingchen closed his mouth, then open it again. When no words found its way out, he closed his mouth again.

"Xiao-shishu, I don't mean to pry," Wei Wuxian told him. "But he is desperately searching for you to make amends with you."

"I... I don't... It is my fault that Baixue Temple-," Xiao Xingchen started, remembering the words that Song Lan had shouted at him after Xue Yang's attack, but was interrupted.

"Shishu, I don't mean to be rude but I have to stop you there," Wei Wuxian said, putting a hand up. "I saw what happened while I was investigating Xue Yang, for he helped keep one of my friends hostage. Xue Yang killed everyone in Baixue Temple, so his sins are his own and no one else's."

"But my interference-"

"No, shishu. If you didn't arrest Xue Yang after the Chang clan massacre, he would have gone on to kill more people," Wei Wuxian answered before Xiao Xingchen could go on.

"Furthermore, justice is what you and Song Lan had sworn to uphold, is it not?"

Xiao Xingchen just nodded, sadly staring at the glowing moon. He missed his friend, his soulmate. But how can he show his face to Song Lan after everything that had happened?

"Xiao-shishu," Wei Wuxian said. "I won't force you to meet him if you do not want to, even though avoiding your soulmate will not resolve anything. I should know."

Xiao Xingchen looked at the regretful visage of the god. Had he lost someone as well?

"Life is short, Xiao-shishu," Wei Wuxian said. "I lost the opportunity to have a life with my own soulmate and it eats at me everyday. For words spoken, unspoken, actions that were misunderstood and misconstrued."

Here, Wei Wuxian patted his shoulder gently. "I don't want that for anyone, much less for good people like you and Song-daozhang. So, please, think about it."

Xiao Xingchen was quiet for a while before he nodded. If a god was required to conduct intervention for the two of them, perhaps he really shouldn't avoid Zichen anymore. Perhaps he should just let fate guide them both together again.

"Well then, it's time for you to wake up," Wei Wuxian said suddenly, looking up to the moon. "I'll see you again soon, Xiao-shishu."

Xiao Xingchen blinked...

...and when he opened his eyes again, it was to complete darkness, with the warmth of the bright sunlight shining on his face.

"Daozhang?"

A-Qing's voice permeated his senses and he realised that he was awake in the real world.

"A-Qing?" he returned and the girl hummed in confirmation.

Xiao Xingchen sat up, hand automatically reaching for his sword. He could feel A-Qing's heat beside him and could tell she was eating something from the smacking of her lips.

"Daozhang," she said with her mouth full. "The attendant of the temple came just now to give us food. It's delicious, though a little spicy."

"That's so kind of them," Xiao Xingchen commented, fingers reaching out to touch the tray in front of him. A bowl of steaming hot congee was placed gently into his hands.

"There you go, daoizhang," A-Qing said and Xiao Xingchen thanked her with a smile.

The congee was indeed more spicy than he expected, but he heard that food in Yunmeng were notoriously spicy so he supposed he would have to get accustomed to the taste. When his belly was filled with the warm food, he walked out to enjoy the fresh air and to contemplate his dream.

He heard the sound of sweeping and a man greeting, "Good morning, daoizhang."

"Good morning," he greeted back.

"I am Li Ming," the man said, "I am the attendant here."

"Li-gongzi, we apologise for our trespass last night and for staying without permission. We arrived quite late and we didn't want to bring hassle to anyone by knocking on doors," Xiao Xingchen explained. He didn't see it but the attendant started shaking his hand before realising how futile the gesture was.

"It's alright, dao Zhang. Fuxing Zushi is always welcoming, that's why we never lock his doors," Li Ming said, putting his hand down with slight embarrassment.

"May I ask, who is Fuxing Zushi?" Xiao Xingchen asked. "Forgive my ignorance but I've only recently descended from my master's mountain."

It wasn't exactly a lie but he needed to know if the dream he had the night before was real or just a figment of his own desire. He wanted Song Lan to come look for him, no matter if he actively avoided places that he knew Song Lan would go to search for him.

"According to rumours, Fuxing Zushi was a cultivator that died during the Great Sunshot Campaign," Li Ming answered. "Legend has it that he sacrificed himself to ensure the victory of the cultivators and plants bloomed around his body where it fell and the lands were cleansed from his sacrifice."

"Did the rumours indicate his name?" Xiao Xingchen asked, curious and amused at the same time. What odd stories the commoners have about cultivators.

"Well...no... some say he was a foot soldier who wanted the war to end so that the commoners would suffer no more," the attendant said. Then, he went a little quiet, as if imparting a secret, "Some said that his name was blotted out by the Great Sects so that he would not take away their contributions to the war."

Now THAT did sound like what the Great Sects did to his shizhi. But the attendant wasn't done talking though.

"I did hear," the man paused for a while. "Just something one of the travelers from Yiling said... that he was the Yiling Laozu reborn to bring life where he was the bringer of death when he was alive."

So there was a chance that his dream was real. Perhaps he should stay for another day to see if he would have another similar dream.

"But I'm sure that just poppycock," the man continued after a pause, clearly waiting for some kind of reaction from Xiao Xingchen. "There's no way it is the Yiling Laozu. Jiang-zongzhu from Lotus Pier would surely not have let his temples be built here in Yunmeng if that is the case. They said that Wei Wuxian was killed by Sect Leader Jiang himself for the death of his sister."

"And if I remember correctly, Sect Leader Jiang commissioned like four major temples in Yunmeng for Fuxing Zushi," said the attendant, looking up in contemplation. "One of them in Lotus Pier itself."

"Did Sect Leader Jiang build this temple too?" Xiao Xingchen asked.

"No, no, Merchant Zhu, who regularly takes this route to Lotus Pier built this temple," Li Ming answered. "He pays me to keep it clean."

"Is that so?" Xiao Xingchen commented.

"Yes, it was a godsend to our little village," Li Ming said happily. "Ever since Merchant Zhu built the temple, we hadn't had any run-ins with living corpses. It's like they've all run away."

That did sound like something the Wei Wuxian he met in his dream would do. Use his affiliation with the dead to keep them away from the living.

"Would it be possible for us to stay another night?" Xiao Xingchen asked. He would like to meet his shizhi one more time before he left.

"Of course," Li Ming said. "Like I said, Fuxing Zushi never turns people away."

That made him very curious so Xiao Xingchen asked, "Have you ever had an encounter with Fuxing Zushi?"

"Oh no," the man said with a laugh. "But Merchant Zhu said never to turn away anyone as it would displease Fuxing Zushi. Apparently, all his other temples and shrines are the same."

"Thank you then," Xiao Xingchen said, bowing to the man who became flustered for the courtesy shown by the dao Zhang.

Now left alone with his thoughts, Xiao Xingchen contemplated what he had learned. His body felt rested but his mind was still swirling with thoughts of his shizhi, about how his name was besmirched and his reputation ruined because... because of what? He didn't know and he hadn't asked.

Perhaps he should.

"You can just pray to me and I would know," Wei Wuxian said in greeting. "You don't have to be at my shrine or temple to meet me in your dreams, you know."

Xiao Xingchen was once again amazed by the view of the dark world, with its luminous, round moon and streams of glittering stars. He stood for a while looking out of the pavilion to savour the sight. After being in total darkness for so long, even a night world was a sight to behold.

"I thought it would be easier for you if I was at your shrine," Xiao Xingchen answered, eyes still taking in the way the water rippled when the glowing koi fish swam across its surface.

"I can hear prayers anywhere," Wei Wuxian said. "Though my places of worship makes it easier for me to access places."

"So you can come to the mortal world," Xiao Xingchen said, turning towards the black-clad god.

"Just recently," Wei Wuxian answered. "It took me a while to learn how to do that via my temples. It's easier for me to travel through shadows because well..." he gestured to the night world to indicate his affinity with the darkness.

Xiao Xingchen sat down at the table, accepting a cup of tea from his martial nephew.

"What is it that you wanted to ask?" Fuxing Zushi asked. When Xiao Xingchen shot him a look, he explained, "Usually, when someone pray to a god, they want answers or a solution to a problem they have."

"I..." Xiao Xingchen paused. Should he really ask about his shizhi's past life when the god looked at peace with his current status now?

"Is it about Song Lan?" Wei Wuxian asked. But before Xiao Xingchen could formulate an answer to that loaded question, he continued, "Daozhang Song is really regretful for what he said to you that day Xue Yang attacked Baixue. Will you not see him and resolve your misunderstanding?"

Xiao Xingchen looked down sorrowfully. He did want to meet Zichen but he didn't know what to say to the man that was once his entire world.

"It looks like you are still undecided," the god said, "I suppose it is not my right to push the issue further but should fate pull the two of you together, please remember my advice."

Xiao Xingchen looked back up at the god who smiled wistfully.

"Life is short and second chances don't always come knocking on your door," Fuxing Zushi said.

Xiao Xingchen bit his lip and nodded.

"For now, if you and Xiao A-Qing have nowhere to go, you can head over to Burial Mounds in Yiling to help my friend Wen Ning set up a sanctuary," Wei Wuxian said. "It'll be a place where people with no where to go can rest and recuperate."

"Not a temple?" Xiao Xingchen asked.

Wei Wuxian shrugged. "If Huaisang and Wen Ning decided to convert the cave into a temple, then it is up to them. But I'd like it if you could go there. It will be a place for you and A-Qing to rest before you decide on what you want to do from there."

Xiao Xingchen smiled in gratitude. He had been wandering for quite some time, aimlessly, without his soulmate, so it would be nice to have a place to stay without having to think about

getting back on the road for a while. And he knew that if he so chose not to meet Song Lan, his shizhi would not force it on him.

"I would be glad to go to the Burial Mounds to help your friend," he answered. "But... is there anything I can do to help you clear your name?"

Wei Wuxian blinked in surprise and confusion at the sudden change in topic.

"Ah, Xiao-shishu, don't worry about me," he said, waving his hand dismissive but Xiao Xingchen was adamant.

"Shizhi, the other sects are besmirching your name, spreading lies about you," he said, indignant on behalf of his martial nephew that he had only just met but now without a doubt was kinder, better and wiser than his reputation implied. Xiao Xingchen believed that if he had resorted to demonic cultivation to win the war, he must have had a good reason for it.

"Xiao-shishu, you are so kind to worry for me," Wei Wuxian said, smiling fondly at his martial uncle. "But I am already beyond the mortal world now. Their issues with me then is no longer a factor for me. I have paid my dues after my death and they will too when it is their time to depart the ephemeral world."

Yes, he really was better than the mortal world deserved, thought Xiao Xingchen.

"However," Wei Wuxian continued, tapping a finger on his lower lip. "If you would become a witness against the heinous crimes of the Jin sect, it would resolve a lot of issues for those that are still in the living world."

Here, the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal gave him a sharp smile edged with a dangerous glint in his eyes.

"After all, they were the ones who let Xue Yang loose to go after Baixue Temple."

When they arrived at the Burial Mounds, now aptly renamed as Blossom Mountain(2), it was to a sentient fierce corpse waiting for them at the border of the wards.

"Daozhang Xiao Xingchen?" the fierce corpse called out timidly. "I am Wen Ning. Weigongzi.. ah no, Fuxing Zushi told me to come fetch you inside."

Now, normally, any cultivator would attempt to exorcise the well-known Ghost General of Yiling Laozu upon meeting him but Xiao Xingchen was not a normal cultivator. He had trusted his shizhi thus far, so he would once again put his trust in Wei Wuxian and follow the fierce corpse through the wards.

"Daozhang," A-Qing said, tugging on his sleeve. For a moment, he thought that she might be skeptical in following a fierce corpse, instead she asked in an oddly excited voice, "Is he really a living corpse? I've never seen one this close before!"

"Seen one?" Xiao Xingchen teasingly questioned the girl who persisted in using a cane to imitate being blind. She still haven't admitted to it and he was not about to let on that he had known from the day he met her.

"Well- I... You- You know what I mean!" she stuttered, shaking his sleeve again in annoyance. He smiled in amusement at her indignation.

"Uhm. I'm sorry about the wards," Wen Ning interrupted them as they walked up the hill. "Wei-gongzi put it up to prevent people from coming here as we are trying to keep some people secret."

Xiao Xingchen frowned. He hadn't been informed of this by his martial nephew during their dream meetings. "Like who?"

"Uhm, " Wen Ning hemmed and hawed for a while, contemplating on whether to reveal their biggest secret guest. Then, he decided that since Xiao Xingchen was here to stay, he would definitely find out sooner or later. "It is Sect Leader Nie Mingjue."

Xiao Xingchen paused, before he asked, incredulous, "The one who died of qi deviation?"

"It wasn't a qi deviation," Wen Ning countered. "It was an assassination attempt by the Jins."

Nie Mingjue woke up, feeling much more alive than he had been for the months, to the sounds of the dizi.

"Clarity," he croaked, recognising the song. He might not be very musical compared to his younger brother, but he had heard enough of it to somewhat recognise it.

"Yes, I learned it from Lan Zhan," Wei Wuxian answered him, twirling his flute. It disappeared into the ether. "I asked him about it when I realised that Jin Guangyao had been playing it for you for months before your qi deviation. According to Lan Zhan, when I played it for him, the arrangement of the version that Jin Guangyao had used on you is different from the one he knew."

"How did you find out the song?" Nie Mingjue asked, brows knitting as he sat up to take his meal from Wen Ning.

"While you were sleeping, I went back to my realm to find out more about what Jin Guangyao and Jin Guangshan were planning to do with you," Wei Wuxian said. "I looked through their history and saw glimpses of the past."

Nie Mingjue frowned even harder. "You can see the past?"

Wei Wuxian shrugged. "I have to, in order to judge a soul before reincarnation. It's what I do after all."

Nie Mingjue lost his frown immediately and he barked with laughter at the thought of the man that they had all condemned being the one who was now responsible for their judgement in the afterlife. They all deserved it. Even he himself.

"I cannot wait for Jin Guangshan to meet you in the underworld," Nie Mingjue said honestly, his smile turning vicious. "What I would give to see his face."

Wei Wuxian returned the smile with one equally blood-thirsty.

"Neither can I."

*

*

End Chapter 8

Chapter End Notes

(1) In this verse, I hc that WY did die in the Xuanwu Cave from fever and in the Burial Mounds but upon reaching heaven, he decided to yeet himself out of heaven immediately to return to the mortal world to fight the war. N each time he did it, he didn't remember it. Xie Lian was quite exasperated (not that he had any rights to complain) and the other civil gods were super pissed. He clearly had a way with death so his designation somewhat overlapped with death and life because of it.

(2) (花山/Huashan) or Blossom Mountain - After all the impending shitshow, WY would later open this mountain for those who seek sanctuary with Wen Ning being its caretaker.

Next chapter is gonna be Lan Xichen. *rubs hands* Maybe. Probably. If my flighty brain doesn't derail me.

The Venerable Mother

Chapter Summary

Wei Ying's influence creeps towards other sects, but in the guise of another identity.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Lan Xichen first heard of the new deity when he was leading a group of cultivators to a night hunt in a town close to the borders of Jiangling and Gusu.

A week ago, there had been sightings of a herd of deer yao reported heading towards that town. Originally, Lan Xichen wanted to dispatch a group of only senior disciples to exorcise them but according to the other cultivators that have encountered the herd, the demons were formidable and fast, so Lan Xichen decided attend to this case himself.

Unfortunately, his attention had been diverted by his progressively hassled youngest sworn brother, who seemed more bullied and abused every time he saw him.

(Sometimes, deep in the recesses of his mind where it was often muted by his internal restraint, his stringent upbringing and logical mind, Lan Xichen wished that Jin Guangshan would disappear. He'd caused so much pain and suffering to his little brother by vilifying the Yiling Laozu, abused A-Yao so horribly and the horrid wretch had so obviously reveled in the death of his Dage.)

By the time he could attend to the matter of the deer yao himself, he feared that he had lost track of the herd. Still, he and his cultivators headed towards the town that the herd was last seen heading.

The town was smaller than Caiyi but the people there were no less friendly. Upon setting foot on the town, Lan Xichen immediately engaged with a stall owner to ask if there were any sightings of demons in the forest around their town.

"Demons? We haven't seen any since the temple was built a year ago," answered the man.

"Temple?" Lan Xichen enquired in curiosity.

"Fuxing-Niangniang(1)'s temple!" the man said, pointing in the general direction of the aforementioned temple. "You can't miss it! Many of the locals go there to make wishes and the merchants that pass through will go there to pray for safety."

"Is it that effective?" asked one of the Lan seniors skeptically.

"Ask the silk merchants," said the man. "The temple was built by them. Said that Niangniang keeps the roads safe."

Lan Xichen had never heard of Fuxing-Niangniang before. He filed a mental note to visit the temple, if only to ensure that the local patron goddess was not some malicious being parading as a benevolent god. In the meantime, the rest of the Lan cultivators dispersed around town to collect information.

A shichen later, they all returned bearing the same stories about the lack of demon deer sightings, or rather, any demon sightings.

"Perhaps the herd has already passed through?" suggested Lan Lixing.

"Someone would still have seen it or heard about it," countered another senior. "The residents also mentioned that they haven't seen any living corpses around since the temple was established."

He'd also been given that answer a few times and it really piqued his interest.

"Then, perhaps it was time we pay the temple a little visit," Lan Xichen said in response.

The cultivators in white made their way to the modest temple, which was crowded with worshippers. On the nameboard, written in beautiful calligraphy, was the name 'Temple of the Moon and Stars'.

It took a while of conversing with the attendant before they were given a tour of the establishment, and that was mainly because they had to wait for most of the worshippers to finish their prayers.

In the main hall hung a portrait of a beautiful young woman at the altar. She stood on a large pink lotus with the crescent moon clasped in her hand. A crown of star was depicted on her forehead and instead of an elaborate hairdo like most goddesses had, she wore her hair in a simple half bun with bare branches tipped with plum blossoms as a hair crown. Her robes were black lined with red embroidery and she had a long gossamer red shawl draped around her shoulders trailing down to her feet.

Lan Xichen took a moment to stare at the painting, a feeling of deja-vu niggling at the back of his mind. The features on the portrait looked... almost familiar but he just couldn't put a finger on it.

"Who painted the portrait?" he queried politely.

"I apologise for my lack of knowledge, sir, but the merchants who built the temple brought the painting of Fuxing Mushi," answered the attendant.

"Fuxing Mushi? Not Fuxing Niangniang?" asked Lan Xichen.

"Ah, the locals call her Niangniang because she has been kind and caring to us," the attendant answered. "We used to be plagued by Yaos because our town is surrounded by wilderness but ever since Fuxing Niangniang settled here, the demons didn't dare to breach the town border."

That would explain why the demonic deers did not make an appearance at the town despite being in their travel path.

The temple was calm and quiet, with the scent of lotus and sandalwood drifting in the air as the monks chanted their hymns. Lan Xichen felt no evil intent nor residual resentment so Fuxing Mushi was likely not a fake deity.

Still, there was an uneasiness in him that made him keep looking up at the painting of the Venerable Mother of Renewal.

He couldn't help but feel as if he'd seen that face before...

And those red eyes that watched him back.

It started out as a misconception.

Qiongqi Path used to be a popular travelling route for merchants from Yunmeng to Lanling, Qishan and Qinghe (and vice versa) once upon a time during the ruling of Wen Mao. At that time, the name of the route was not Qiongqi Path. It was only after the appearance of the famed divine beast that the route was renamed as such.

Apparently, the fiery flames of the Qiongqi scorched the earth and left such a devastating mark on the area that nothing much could grow there. To make matters worse, that was the place the infamous Yiling Patriarch had lost control and murdered the Jin Sect heir. What most people also didn't know was that the Jins had set up slave camps on the path and murdered a lot of Wens there as well.

This was all to say that it was not a surprise that Qiongqi Path was no longer a route of choice for most merchants as the place seemed to be festered with dark creatures and fierce corpses.

When the merchants from Yiling discovered that corpses tended to avoid caravans with the pictures of Yiling Laozu pasted on as protection, they started pasting his paintings on all their cargo. Then the newly minted Fuxing Zushi started answering prayers for his followers and protecting their livelihood, so the merchants began building shrines on their routes to pray for safety. It didn't take long at all for other merchants and travelers from other sects to pick up on the belief, despite not knowing or understanding the full context.

Nie Huaisang himself was quite surprised to discover small shrines dedicated to his friend in the outskirts of Qinghe, built without his knowledge months after the fact.

Naturally, with Qiongqi Path being a more strategic travelling route, some merchants begin entertaining the idea of building shrines there. They started out with one moderately sized shrine with a small figurine made of clay that was, frankly, quite androgynous on retrospect.

Like all the other times when he discovered one of his places of worship, Wei Ying gave it his blessings without much thought. He was used to doing it as a treat to his followers in appreciation for their belief in him.

The next day, the shrine was beset with flowers and foliage.

The locals from the nearest village were quite bewildered to find such fertile growth in those barren lands. When questioned, the merchants, who had stopped by to pray before leaving enroute, informed them that the shrine was dedicated to Fuxing Zushi.

"He(2) protects the land from dark creatures," one of the merchants claimed. "We always travel the route with his shrines for safety."

The locals didn't believe it at first but as time went by and no sightings of Yao or fierce corpses were reported, they began to frequent the shrine more. They cleaned the shrine and made offerings and prayers, though they never dared touch the foliage that grew around the shrine, covering even the little plaque with the title of the god.

"The Venerable Father of Renewal?" someone said, recalling the words of the merchants. "It cannot be. Surely, the protector and bringer of life cannot be a man? Surely, someone so loving and caring is a mother who holds her supplicants to her bosom like they were her children."

And thus, instead of Fuxing Zushi, they started referring to the god of the shrine as Fuxing Mushi.

Any travelers who came by were treated to tales of how Fuxing Mushi's presence deter dark beings and brings protection to the villagers. They left carrying those tales with them and before long, more shrines appeared on Qiongqi Path.

And as time went by, Qiongqi Path began to change with the fertile growth that came with the blessings of one Wei Wuxian.

Unfortunately, around that time, Wei Wuxian was too busy trying to hit his mid way mark with his backlog to realise what had happened with his title and the influence it had on the mortal world.

By the time he realised that some of his temples and shrines not built by Jiang Cheng and Nie Huaisang were worshipping a female version of him, it was too late to do anything about it. (It didn't stop him from griping about it though. Wen Qing was equal parts annoyed and extremely amused by the misconception.)

He didn't set out to mislead them with the flowers or anything. They just assumed that because he had a certain influence in new life that he was affiliated with Xiwangmu(3).

His worshippers even changed his title from a Patriarch to MOTHER!

He knew he joked about giving birth to A-Yuan before, but he had no idea that his prank would come back to bite him in the ass this way, like a twisted cosmic joke.

Just to be sure he did not offend the Great Mother (because she was scary!!!), he went to her palace to request an audience to apologise on behalf of his followers. The Queen Mother merely laughed in amusement at his contrite expression.

"Since we are both Yin-based Gods, it is really not surprising that your followers make an association between the two of us," the Great Mother said calmly, standing up from her throne to make her way down her dais. "Furthermore, with your connection to rebirth and reconstruction, it is not a farfetched assumption."

"I'm just... I just don't want to be an upstart and be assumed to be you," he admitted, ducking his head a little. "This one shouldn't be getting any merit for this misconception."

"What ridiculousness is this?" she reprimanded him. "Do you not work hard to fulfill your duties and answer the prayers of your followers as best as you can?"

"Well, I try," he admitted. "Not very well... but..."

"Nonsense," she refuted firmly, coming close to him. "You are the newest chthonic god that we have in the underworld and you have made a name for yourself in the mortal world in barely a handful of years."

"Xie Lian has nothing but kind words for everyone, but even he is outspokenly impressed with your work. Yama is elated with your presence, even if he never shows it, and let me tell you, that child has never been happy about anything since his ascension here," she continued without letting him say a word. "And Zhuanlun is practically ready to adopt you so you would be a permanent extension of his division."

"Not that he would ever succeed," she said with narrowed eyes. "Because I would never approve it. I think it's mainly so he can shove all his work to you and galivant off somewhere with his husband."

Wei Wuxian didn't know what to say to that so he awkwardly looked side ways. Xiwangmu was a very formidable goddess of the underworld, with a firm grip in the creation of life. To be associated with a goddess so exalted was making him sweat buckets just by thinking about it.

She patted him on the shoulder, bringing him back to the present after her rambling about her 'sons'.

"Worry not, child," Xiwangmu consoled him. "Your followers are also mine. Your work also contributes to the underworld. You are stealing no one's glory nor merit."

Wei Wuxian bowed low, thanking the Great Mother for her benevolence and kind words.

"As a mother to another, if Xiao Ying has any need for advice, please feel free to come," the Great Mother said, patting his head gently. "Now hurry along. I think your assistant is looking for you."

Wei Wuxian left Xiwangmu's palace post haste as if he was being chased by a dozen dogs. It was only after he had returned to his own realm that he registered her words.

"What did she mean by that!?"

Jiang Cheng and Jin Zixuan of course found it hilarious. (To be fair, Jiang Yanli had been giggling almost non-stop since she found out, but she was too nice to outwardly laugh in his face about it) He retaliated by going to Lord Wind Master Qingxuan and asking him to teach him how to transform.

The next time Jiang Cheng appeared in the underworld in his dream, he was met with a buxom-figured female version of his brother. His face turned crimson red and wow, Wei Ying never thought anyone could turn that red in their dreams.

"What do you think, A-Cheng?" Wei Ying asked, turning around in a circle to show of her new form. Her black and gold ruqun floated around him like a cloud of silk. So light! Unlike the thick, heavy robes he was forced to wear as a male.

"Shameless!" Jiang Cheng hissed in embarrassment. Which was just unfair. It wasn't as if she was naked or anything!

Wei Wuxian gasped, offended. "But I didn't do anything! Jie! A-Cheng is being mean to me again!"

"A-Cheng," Jiang Yanli reprimanded her younger brother, though her smile ruined the effect. Wei Ying threw her hands around her sister's shoulders, sticking her tongue out at her brother, who's red face contorted into annoyance instead.

"Why are you dressed like that!?" he hissed again, looking around the pavilion to see if anyone else was around. But alas, the three of them were the only ones there.

"I wanted to try it out," Fuxing Mushi said, straightening up to tower over her sister by a head. Huh, it seemed as if her height was not affected much by her gender.

"Why?" Jiang Cheng gave him an odd look.

"Because I can," Wei Wuxian answered back, adjusting the modest collar of her ruqun. She was much more bustier than her sister, which was surprising considering the fact that she

wasn't even a real woman.

"Does it feel weird?" Jiang Cheng asked curiously, eyes temporarily going to her breast before immediately shifting back to her face.

"It does," Wei Wuxian admitted, appreciating the sympathetic look on Jiang Cheng's face. "They are heavy. I think I might actually get shoulder and back pain soon."

"A-Xian," Jiang Yanli said and Wei Ying immediately look contrite. "I'm glad you understand the pains of being a woman as many will look to you to commiserate with their suffering."

Wei Ying pouted, trying not to adjust her well-endowed chest. The last time she did that in front of Jin Zixuan, her brother-in-law nearly fell into the water from all his flailing about and Wen Qing smacked her in the head.

"Does Lan Wangji know about this?" Jiang Cheng asked, indicating all of Wei Wuxian with a finger.

"Not yet," Wei Ying answered with a shrug. "Don't know how he'll react."

"Whatever," Jiang Cheng said, trying to look nonchalant. "As long he doesn't say anything insensitive."

"Aww, is my didi worried that Lan-er-gege will hurt my feelings?" asked Wei Ying, hand on her chest with a touched look on her pretty face.

"What!? No! Why would I care about an annoying thing like you!?"

"A-Cheng! So mean! I'll cry!"

"What! NO! Don't you dare! Don't you look at me like that! Stop!"

Qin Su contemplated her tea as she thought about how she should tell her A-Yao that she was pregnant. Under normal circumstances, she would have been delighted by her pregnancy, but not for the first time since she allowed the love of her life to bed her, she wondered if she had done the right thing.

Her father had been against A-Yao merely because of his heritage, which was unfair to him. A-Yao never asked to be born to a prostitute!

And so, to force his hand, both of them decided to consummate their love. A-Yao had promised that he would take responsibility and she believed him.

However, now with a child in the mix, Qin Su begin to wonder if she had been a little too hasty with her decision that night. If her father did not relent to them marrying, it would not only be her reputation that suffered. Poor A-Yao too would be incriminated and he had already suffered so much.

"Fuxing Mushi really answered my prayers," Qin Su overheard a girl say to her friend as they ate at the table behind her. "I had a dream that I met my match in Lu Village and when I got there, my A-Ming was waiting for me at the front gate. He told me he had a dream of meeting me there."

"Oh, I want to pray for my match too!" her friend said earnestly. "But wouldn't it be better to pray to Yue Lao (4)?"

"I prayed to Yue Lao for a match," the girl said, her happy visage turning pouty instead. "Then the matchmaker proposed to me on behalf of the Chen family. But before the match was confirmed with my parents, Chen-gongzi got another girl pregnant and he rejected me. My parents were so devastated and scared that no one would propose for me again, even though it wasn't my fault and the Chens were the ones who proposed."

"So you went to the Goddess of Renewal!?" her friend laughed. "I was wondering why you went to her!"

"Don't laugh!" the girl scolded. "I was really worried because my mom said that my reputation is ruined because everyone knew that he picked a maid over me!"

"But it wasn't your fault!" her friend said indignantly. "Hmph, that Chen boy, I hope Fuxing Mushi punishes him!"

Then, as if she had recalled a memory, she gasped and started laughing, giggling hard as she tried to cover her mouth. "Oh. Oh. He was punished! Now that I think about it!"

"What? What do you mean?" the first girl asked, pulling at her friend's sleeve. Qin Su leaned in, curious to hear the rest of the story.

"The other day, I heard the physician talking about a Chen Zuyong having his member bitten off by a fish while he was swimming in a lake!" her friend revealed, laughing uncontrollably. Qin Su slapped her hand on her mouth to stop the laugh threatening to burst from her mouth.

"No!! That's the gongzi that proposed to my parents for me!" the girl gasped in delight.

"If it was so easily bitten off, it surely isn't that big!" her friend continued to laugh uproariously. "Must have looked like a worm!"

At that, the girl giggled so much tears were streaming down her cheeks. "Fuxing Niangniang really did punish him for me!!"

"Ah, now I want to go pray to Fuxing Mushi for a match too!"

Qin Su sat a little while longer as the two girls' conversation changed to another topic before she got up from her chair to approach them. It wouldn't be wrong to ask for a little divine

help before she broke the news about her pregnancy to her father.

"Excuse me," she spoke to the two young ladies. "I couldn't help but overhear your conversation just now. Could I know where Fuxing Mushi's temple is?"

Fuxing Mushi's temple was a little further than she had expected.

But after some persuasion from Qin Su, her mother agreed to accompany her to the temple, which was situated close to Laoling's border to Qinghe.

The Temple of the Moon and Stars in Laoling was relatively smaller than Qin Su was used to in the gleaming townships of her hometown and Lanling, but it was packed with worshippers of all ages and genders.

"Merchants from Qinghe like to stop by this temple before they proceed to Lanling," an attendant explained as a group of cheery travelers took their leave after paying respects to their patron god. "Madam Qin, Lady Qin, please follow me."

They followed the red-clad apprentice into the main hallway and into a section that was relatively quiet and private for them to settle down to meditate and pray. Qin Su gratefully sank down on the cushion, her nausea abating somewhat after the long travel in the carriage. Her mother too settled down beside her, listening to the monks chant hypnotically.

"I hope my father will allow us to marry," she prayed silently to the beautiful Venerable Mother. "And that my pregnancy will be smooth and safe."

Meanwhile, Madam Qin too confessed the secret that she had buried in her heart for decades and prayed that her daughter would never, ever marry the son of Jin Guangshan.

Jin Guangshan didn't believe in praying to gods.

After all, so many women have claimed that he would be punished by the gods for all his wrongdoings, and yet, he was enjoying his life to the fullest. His clan was thriving, his coffers were filled to the brim, he could enjoy any food he craved and he could have any woman he wanted.

Why would he fear any punishment? He did nothing wrong in claiming what was rightfully his.

That being said, his legal wife wanted him to go with her to pray for a good reincarnation for their late son and had been hounding him to at least make a show of his sorrow at losing his only (legitimate) son on the anniversary of Zixuan's death.

It wasn't as if he didn't feel devastated at his son's passing. He loved Zixuan too. But what was done was already done. There was no point crying and beating his chest for his dead son.

Still, the woman wouldn't stop harping and so, despite his reluctance, Jin Guangshan made the nominal effort of attending the ceremony at a relatively new temple that Langya boasted.

"I spoke to a lot of the followers and they said that Fuxing Mushi will ensure Young Master Jin will have a good life in his next reincarnation," Madam Jin's attendant said as she lead the frail matriarch of the Jin Sect through the threshold of the temple.

Venerable Mother of Renewal, huh.

Jin Guangshan surmised that the goddess was probably a matronly woman who ascended after death to be the patron god of childbirth or something to have such an unflattering title.

The Jin Sect Leader entered the praying hall, trailing behind his wife slowly, and was proven wrong instantly in his assumption when his eyes landed on the large life-sized painting of the deity.

She was a goddess indeed, with a tall, slim stature and curves in all the right places. His eyes traced her generous bosom as his mouth watered. When he looked up, her beautiful, well-sculpted face greeted him but it was her ruby eyes that caught his attention.

What kind of god had red eyes like a demonic cultivator?

Jin Guangshan felt a shiver run down his spine. But instead of fear, he misinterpreted it as desire. He reached down to stroke his cock over his robes and felt his phallus throb and jerk in excitement.

He can't wait for this to end.

Surely, the nearest brothel would have some beauties he had yet to sample and even if they weren't as exquisite as this Goddess of the Moon and Stars (and wasn't that title befitting of her beauty?), it wouldn't be difficult at all to imagine her beneath him.

*

*

End chapter 9

Chapter End Notes

FYI: Yes, it was icky for me to write the last part. His perception of WY's female form as oppose to LXC's is like heaven and hell. So disrespectful and arrogant. So it's really no surprise that with this offense (aka touching himself in her temple) WY is now given full rights to punish him. BWAHAHAHA. Off with his DICK!

(1) Niangniang - title given to Empress, Goddess, Queen or Honored Mother. It is less formal than MUSHI aka Venerable Mother.

(2) In mandarin, She (她) Tā and He (他) Tā sounds similar.

(3) Xiwangmu (西王母 "Queen Mother of the West) is the dark, chthonic goddess, pure yin, at the same time terrifying and benign, both creation and destruction, associated with tigers and weaving.

The 'Mu' in her title is the same as Fuxing MUshi.

Xiwangmu is also known to own the orchard of the Peaches of Immortality. This lady is badass and WY is super scared of offending her but fortunately, like all women who meets WY, she's quite fond of him and thinks of him as one of her 'sons' now. That's right, the underworld gods are all her sons.

(4) Yue Lao (Chinese: 月下老人; pinyin: Yuè Xià Lǎorén; literally 'the old man under the moon') is a god of marriage and love in Chinese mythology. He appears as an old man under the moon. WY likes to go hassle this poor man for entertainment since they are neighbours in the dark realm. lol.

According to the maps, Qinghe is north of Yunmeng, with Lanling somewhat north-east of them and Gusu is east of Yunmeng (Jiangling being the town closest to Gusu). So between the two main clans, WY's influence is bleeding towards the east by way of QiongQi Path. Ironic, right?

P.S. In case anyone gets on me about LWJ's reaction, he will be featured in the next chapter.

Meetings in the Sly

Chapter Summary

Lan Wangji meets another iteration of his heavenly spouse and Lan Xichen gets the shock of his life. Meanwhile, Wei Ying is scheming, scheming, scheming.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It wasn't in Lan Wangji's nature to count days until the end of his punishment. But he felt hard pressed not to feel that way when seclusion meant that he was unable to see his son. Sometimes, he wondered if A-Yuan still remembered him as his Die-die or if one of the elders had punished it out of his son and demanded that his child call him by his formal title.

Once, when he voiced that out, Wei Ying chided him for thinking such thoughts.

"You see A-Yuan in his dreams all the time and he still calls you Die-die. Also, I check on A-Yuan when he is awake and when I can't, A-Jie would," Wei Ying told him, lying in his arms on one of the rare occasions that he could physically visit. "Your brother coddles A-Yuan. Your Uncle doesn't even let the elders punish him when he accidentally breaks any rules."

It made Lan Wangji feel better knowing that his Uncle treated A-Yuan well. He forgave Uncle for not believing him when he said that Wei Ying was good but he would never have forgiven him if he had taken out any of his frustration with Wangji on Lan Yuan.

"Of course, it helps that Yuanyuan is like his Die-die and is so well-behaved and good," Wei Ying said, tweaking Lan Wangji's nose teasingly.

Lan Wangji responded by pulling Wei Ying close and kissing his lips softly. "A-Yuan is more like Wei Ying," he countered.

"Haiyo, Lan-er-gege, is this a competition? He's our son. Of course he is going to be like the both of us," Wei Ying said, pulling Lan Zhan in for another kiss.

Despite the fact they had just sated themselves minutes prior, Lan Wangji was always receptive to any overtures from his significant other. Having been separated first by death and now by the heavens, he would never take any form of affection from Wei Ying for granted ever again.

Lan Wangji knew that he would spend an eternity with his soulmate if he had the fortune to live long enough to cultivate to ascension, but he was impatient to be with his Wei Ying whenever he could, however way possible. Fortunately, Wei Ying had the same

understanding. So, on the god's second visit to him during his seclusion, Lan Zhan had proposed.

"You mean elope?" Wei Ying asked, sitting on Lan Wangji's lap as the man held him close after their brief stint of separation.

"Yes," Lan Zhan answered hoarsely. He hadn't known when he could physically see Wei Ying again and so, when the god suddenly appeared from the shadows, he had been overwhelmed with the feeling of relief, love and happiness.

Wei Ying stroked his hair and kissed his bare forehead. "If that is what my Lan Zhan wants, then let's do that," he said decisively. "Will never say no to my Lan-er-gege ever again."

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji said, lump in his throat as he stared at the bright smile that his love bestowed him.

And so, kneeling at the mouth of the secluded ice cave, the two of them did their three bows; to the heavens, to the direction of Lan Zhan's ancestral hall and to each other.

Lan Wangji had never known a happier day in his life.

And never will again...

Though he does come close to it on the day Lan Sizhui (1) received his inner clan ribbon and looked up at him to smile sweetly.

Or the day that Sizhui, his beloved son, got married.

Or when his other children were born.

And when they too, got married and had children of their own.

The only day that could ever surpass his wedding day, was when he ascended to be with his love.

Lan Wangji had been cultivating well for the past three years in seclusion and dual cultivation with a god (especially a Yin-based one) for half that time had boosted his golden core exponentially. Wei Ying surmised that Lan Zhan would probably be able to ascend within a decade or so, but after a lengthy discussion, they both agree that waiting to do so would be in A-Yuan's best interest.

A-Yuan was only five and neither of them wanted to leave their child to fend for himself without any guidance, at least until he was well-established and well-equipped enough to face the world on his own. It would be cruel to do so when A-Yuan had already lost so many loved ones, whether he remembered it or not.

"Well, he would still have his Jiujiu, Bobo and his Shugong," Wei Ying said. "But it's just not the same as a parent."

"I know he can still see us occasionally in Youming (2) but since I can't be here physically all the time," Wei Ying continued, looking wistful and sad. "Lan Zhan will have to do the heavy-lifting in the parenting responsibilities."

Lan Wangji agreed and so the matter was settled for now.

A month before his seclusion ends, Wei Ying paid him another visit, the last during the duration of his confinement.

He had been meditating when he heard the sound of someone entering into the cavern that acted as his meditation room and knowing that it was his husband (that word never stopped making his heart jump with glee and happiness) by the scent of the lotus incense that seemed to permeate Wei Ying's clothes constantly now, he said nothing as he continued to keep his eyes closed to focus on finishing his session.

He felt someone sit beside him and wait.

When he finished and opened his eyes, turning to his spouse to thank him for his patience, he was shocked into silence.

A woman, dressed in black and red, sat beside him with an impish smile and a familiar glimmer in her eyes.

"Xianggong(3)~," she crooned, wrapping her arms around his. "You ignored me for so long. A-Ying is so sad!"

"...A-Ying..." he repeated, mind still gloriously blank at his husband's appearance and the 'xianggong~'.

Wei Ying pouted, her lips full and red, like a beacon that attracted Lan Wangji's eyes.

"Lan-er-gege," she whined in that voice that said 'pay attention to me'. But alas, Lan Wangji was still too shocked to do more than blink at her. After a moment, she visibly deflated, brows wrinkling together in disappointment.

"Does Lan-er-gege hate me like this?" Wei Ying asked, lower lip jutting out even more in an expression of pure dismay.

This made Lan Wangji want to reassure his wife? husband? to the contrary, if only he could get his brain to actually think of the correct words to do so. He opened his mouth, then closed it. Then he opened his mouth and closed it one more time.

His expression was so flummoxed that Wei Ying gave a peal of laughter, almost collapsing onto the cave floor.

"Lan-Er-Gege! You're so funny! Even Jiang Cheng wasn't so funny! I wish Jiang Cheng can see this!"

At the mention of Jiang Wanyin, Lan Wangji felt a jolt of annoyance at the way he was being laughed at.

"Wei Ying," he said firmly and the woman automatically straightened.

"Here," she quipped joyfully, even going so far as raising her hand, an action reminiscing their time in the Library Pavilion during more peaceful times before the war. This movement made her long, sweeping sleeve slide down her arm, revealing a thin, white arm, very much different from Wei Ying's original male form, which was tan and more muscular. But the long, white silk ribbon wrapped around her small wrist definitely belonged to Lan Wangji, at least, it once did until he gave it to Wei Ying.

"Why...?" he couldn't think of how to ask the question regarding his spouse's gender change. How does one ask a question like that?

"Oh, oh," Wei Ying externalised, jumping up to twirl around to show off her curvy form. "I found out that some of my followers worship me as a female, so I decided to pick up shapeshifting from Lord Wind Master Qingxuan. It would make going out with you and A-Yuan so much more fun!"

Lan Wangji tried to imagine the three of them going out like they were a family of a father, a mother and a son. They would look like any conventional family, something that would easily be overlooked by observers. No one would say a thing and no one would look twice at them.

In theory, at least.

Lan Wangji was not someone with a low profile. Everyone in the cultivation world knew who he was and the commoners knew his name, at the very least. His very presence in any town or village warranted a second look and he knew that anyone he accompanied would be noticed immediately and extensively. They would think that he had a hidden wife and A-Yuan had a mother that could never be named or spoken of.

He didn't want that. He didn't want anyone to even think that he would hide his spouse, for any reason at all.

His thoughts were brought back to the present when Wei Ying sat down beside him again and grasped his arm. He could feel her soft breast pressed against him. Normally, he would feel a sense of discomfort and disgust if any woman did this to him, but oddly, he did not feel that way. Probably because he knew that this was Wei Ying and Wei Ying was the only one he could ever want.

"Don't I look pretty?" Wei Ying asked, fluttering her eyelashes at him.

"Mn, Very pretty," Lan Wangji replied.

"Ah," Wei Ying covered her pink cheeks with her hands, acting shy. "Lan-er-gongzi is so kind to praise this maiden so generously."

"Wei Ying is Wei Ying," Lan Wangji answered truthfully. "Looks beautiful in any form."

Wei Ying made a sound resembling a kettle, now covering her face with her hands. "Lan-er-gege, why are you so shameless!?"

"Not shameless, telling the truth," Lan Wangji replied, putting his arms around his lover to pull her closer.

"Lan Zhan is so good to me, you're the best," cooed Wei Ying, removing her hands to reveal her pleased expression.

"No," Lan Wangji interjected. "Wei Ying is the best."

"Lan Zhan!" Wei Ying exclaimed, once again thrown off course by Lan Wangji's honesty.

"It is the truth," Lan Wangji insisted, enjoying returning the favour of messing with his spouse after so many years of Wei Ying's teasing.

Wei Ying pouted. Then he pointed at Lan Wangji, "You're teasing me! Mean!"

"Mn. Only to Wei Ying," he replied, standing up. Then, he turned around to pick up the female form of his husband.

"Wha-?" Wei Ying exclaimed, automatically throwing her arms around Lan Wangji's neck as he bridal carried her towards their bedroom. "Lan Zhan!"

"Want to see if everything is different," Lan Wangji explained succinctly. Wei Ying caught on immediately and laughed, legs kicking up in glee. When she settled down, she spied Lan

Wangji's bright red ears and hummed.

"Ah, Lan-er-gongzi, are you going to be having your way with me? What if you get me pregnant," Wei Ying exclaimed in faux embarrassment.

"Shameless," the word was said automatically, the intent behind it meaningless as Lan Wangji laid his spouse on their bed.

"Only for you, xianggong," Wei Ying said cheekily, opening her arms in welcome.

"Mn."

Everything was different and yet, the same.

The curves and the softness threw him off for a while but listening to Wei Ying moan and whisper encouragement in his ears helped remind him who it was in his arms. It didn't take long at all for Lan Wangji to love this form just as much as Wei Ying's original male form. They both opened so beautifully to him and received him so whole-heartedly that Lan Wangji knew for certain that there would be no other that could take Wei Ying's place in any lifetime or any worlds.

It didn't matter what physical form Wei Ying wore, because his love for him transcended everything corporeal and earthly.

"Only Wei Ying," he whispered to his spouse, lying in her arms with his head resting on the valley of her breasts. "Wei Ying is the only one for me."

Wei Ying hummed contently, stroking his hair gently and soothingly.

"Same," Wei Ying agreed.

Then, after a moment, she spoke again.

"Lan Zhan will be exiting seclusion soon."

"Yes," Lan Wangji replied, lifting his head up to look at the beautiful visage of his spouse.

"The next Sect Conference will be in three months time," Wei Ying commented. "It's at Koi Tower."

"Yes," Lan Wangji said again, annoyed at the mention of the sect that called for Wei Ying's death and also curious as to their line of conversation.

"Lan Zhan should go with the Lan delegation. Show some support to your brother," Wei Ying continued. "A-Cheng will be there, of course. He'd want to give you a present for A-Yuan. Or maybe a hundred. Sometimes, Jiang Cheng just don't know how to control himself when it comes to buying toys for kids. He's already spoiling Jin Ling-"

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji interrupted Wei Ying's tirade. "Why?"

"Because we are going to have some fun," replied his spouse, a smile of utter wickedness on her pretty lips.

Lan Xichen was looking for his little nephew.

By right, A-Yuan should be with the caretaker at the creche but the poor disciple in charge had discovered the boy missing after naptime and had frantically searched for the child before coming to his Sect Leader to report his nephew missing.

Fortunately, Lan Xichen knew that there was only one place that little A-Yuan loved going to.

The rabbit field.

As the cultivator in white approached the clearing, he could hear a child's laughter ringing out from the aforementioned field.

"Niang! I caught one!"

Lan Xichen paused, then he picked up his speed.

That was A-Yuan's voice! And a woman's voice was laughing alongside with the child's.

When Lan Xichen entered the clearing to have an unobstructed view of the occupants, he was met with the back of a woman carrying his nephew in her arms lovingly.

"A-Yuan is the best!" she said, cuddling the child close to her as A-Yuan showed her the little white rabbit in his hands.

Lan Xichen was about to shout out to her to let go of his nephew when she turned suddenly to level a look at him, red eyes burning into him.

"A-Yuan must be a good boy for Die-die and Bobo, okay?" she said, still looking at Lan Xichen as she put Lan Yuan down on the ground. "Don't run away again."

"Yes, Niang," A-Yuan replied obediently and the woman released Lan Xichen from her gaze to kiss the lovable boy on his forehead, right over his Lan Clan ribbon.

"A-Niang will meet you again soon," she said, brushing a gentle hand on the child's head.

"Stop!" Lan Xichen finally managed to say, released from whatever spell the woman had put on him.

The woman looked at him again and started walking towards him, steps slow and deliberate. With a jolt of recognition, Lan Xichen realised that the woman approaching him was none other than Fuxing Mushi, whose temple he had just visited a week prior.

"You- You're-"

She stepped into the shade of the foliage that Lan Xichen was standing in and within a blink of an eye, disappeared into thin air.

"Bobo!"

Lan Xichen looked towards his nephew, who was toddling towards him with a wide smile. The Sect Leader shook himself from his stupor to pick his nephew up and cuddle him close, his heart rabbiting rapidly.

What did a goddess want with his precious nephew?

Why did A-Yuan call her A-Niang?

"Baobao, who was that just now?" Lan Xichen asked his nephew, who blinked endearingly.

"A-Niang!" the little boy answered enthusiastically.

"Who...? A-Niang?" Lan Xichen parroted in complete confusion, swaying where he stood as he contemplated the implication of his brother having a child with a goddess... doesn't that also mean that A-Yuan was a demi-god!?

For the first time in his life, Lan Xichen thought that all these revelations were beyond his comprehension.

He really can't wait for his brother to come out of seclusion.

Because he was not about to be the one who will tell Lan Qiren about the identity of his beloved grandnephew's mother.

"Wei-Xiong, you're here!" greeted Nie Huaisang as soon as Wei Ying landed on the steps leading to the Demon-Slaughtering Cave, which was now renamed to Temple of Blossom Mountain (Wen Ning insisted on that name when Wei Ying mentioned that they should probably rename the cave now that he wasn't using it anymore. Wei Ying had squinted at him

and had the funny suspicion that Wen Ning was afraid that he would dub it with some questionable name, which was rude!)

"Aa, came to see how everyone was faring," Wei Wuxian said, now back in his male form. Spending a day with his Lan-er-gege exploring his new form was fun, and so was pulling Lan Xichen's leg, but it was much more comfortable in his original form.

"Dage is getting better. Xiao-daozhang has been sparring with him to help him regain his mobility with the sabre," Nie Huaisang reported. Then he sighed. "He was so happy to get Baxia back... but..."

"Is he?" Wei Wuxian commented. "Then I should take a look at the sabre. He has been through a traumatic experience, it might have affected his spiritual weapon."

"Please do," Nie Huaisang begged and Wei Wuxian turned to him questioningly.

"Wei-xiong, it's not common knowledge but our Nie brand of cultivation usually results in the practitioners dying of qi deviation. That's why most of our sect leaders pass away so young despite their strong golden cores," explained Nie Huaisang. Then, he looked down, angry and sad at the same time. "It's why I never thought Dage was still alive after seeing him qi deviate in Koi Tower."

"Hm, is that so," Wei Wuxian said, tapping a finger at his chin. "Well then, let's go take a look at your Dage and Baxia, shall we?"

In the end, his knowledge on resentful energy proved to be vital in stabilising Baxia, which vibrated in both fear and excitement when Wei Wuxian grasped its hilt and inspected it. It didn't take long at all for him to siphon off the resentful energy into the ether where it waited for him to utilise it.

"You really are the Grandmaster," Nie Mingjue commented, watching him intently as the god cleansed his sabre. "No one else would have been able to do that."

"That's why Wei-xiong ascended," concluded Nie Huaisang, also watching as keenly as his brother.

"It's not a permanent solution," Wei Wuxian told a somber Nie Mingjue and a relieved Nie Huaisang, handing Baxia back to her owner. "After what had happened to you, your lifespan expectancy is still very much limited for a cultivator."

"Then, do you know when I will die?" asked Nie Mingjue, looking as if he was prepared to receive any bad news coming his way while Nie Huaisang grabbed his brother's arm, looking as if he could never let his Dage go again.

"I cannot tell you that," Wei Wuxian replied honestly. "By right, you should be dead by now."

Nie Huaisang looked devastated but Nie Mingjue just nodded in acceptance.

"If it wasn't for Fuxing Zushi's intervention, I wouldn't be alive now," Nie Mingjue said.

"Yes," Wei Wuxian confirmed. "So I cut off Xue Yang's lifeline and tied it to you instead. I think the time afforded to you will be more..."

He paused, as if contemplating the word that he was searching for.

"Useful? Appreciated?" Nie Mingjue tried.

"Cherished," finished Wei Wuxian said, eyes flicking to a clingy Nie Huaisang.

Nie Mingjue nodded in understanding, the hand not grasping his sword reaching out to find his didi's hand.

"I am ever grateful for the chance afforded to me," the Nie Sect Leader said, bowing to the god. "I am indebted to you."

"Me too, Wei-xiong," Nie Huaisang said, bowing along with his brother in gratitude.

A year ago, this display would have made him extremely uncomfortable but Wei Wuxian had been constantly reminded by Wen Qing, Jiang Cheng and even Jin Zixuan to accept his due as a heavenly deity, so he nodded in acknowledgement.

"Then I will call in this debt when the time comes," he said, gesturing for the brothers to arise. "After all, we all have a common enemy right now."

Nie Mingjue and Nie Huaisang exchanged looks, sharing an expression of comprehension on their faces.

"That's right," Wei Wuxian confirmed. "We are collecting evidence against the Jins. More specifically, against Jin Guangshan."

"What do you need?" both Nie brothers asked immediately.

"For now, Nie Mingjue will stay here and continue to recuperate because when the time comes, I want you to be at your best. Meanwhile, Huaisang will help me gather a few women I would like you to help me recruit," Wei Wuxian explained. "They've prayed to me to bring justice against our dubious Jin Sect Leader and I would like to deliver exactly that."

Nie Huaisang's eyes gleamed in anticipation with that information.

"Tell me where they are."

Wei Ying returned from his little excursion in the mortal world to a steaming pot of soup waiting for him and a Wen Qing that looked hassled as she dragged him to his work table without any mercy.

"Qing-jieeee, souppppp!!!" he whined, making grabby hands in the air for the pot of soup.

"Shut up! You need to look at this," she said, slamming four folders on his table. He looked and actually recoiled physically, unable to hold back his visceral reaction.

"Wen Ruohan," he read the name of the file. Then he looked at the other three. "Wen Chao. Wen Xu. Wen Zhuliu."

Wei Wuxian was silent for a while, contemplating his next move before he picked up the files and stood up.

"Where are you going?" Wen Qing asked, surprised.

"To Zhuanlun Wang," he answered, walking towards the pier.

"Why?"

"Because I cannot be impartial to them so I have to speak with him first," Wei Wuxian said, floating up into the air to visit his senior.

Unfortunately for him, the 10th King of the Underworld was not there in his office so Wei Wuxian had to go in search for him in the higher plane. He finally found the king in a conversation with Xie Lian at the hallways of the Heavenly Palace.

"Qianbei!" he whined, waving the folders at the elder. "What are these? Why are they on my table?"

"Hm...?" the elder god raised an eyebrow and took the folders to glimpse at it. "Oh. Looks like these ones are finally done with their punishments."

"So quickly?" Wei Wuxian grumbled. "What happened to a 100 years of tongue pulling or oil cauldrons or something?"

Zhuanlun Wang gave him a frown. "You do know that time in the underworld can be manipulated, right? We can't afford to wait a 100 years for each soul to reincarnate. The balance between the dead and the living has to be maintained. The amount of souls that goes to the underworld must equal the amount that leaves."

"I know that but..." Wei Wuxian looked down at the folders before admitting honestly, "I don't know if I can be impartial to these four."

"If you have that fear, then you are exactly the right person to judge them," Xie Lian interjected. "By knowing that you might be impartial to them, you will question your every

verdict before you decide on them. Heavily deliberate your judgements before passing them."

"Yes," Zhuanlun Wang agreed, passing the folders back to them. "Look through their history, interview them, then evaluate whether they deserve mercy for their next reincarnations after the suffering they have gone through in Diyu or whether they require more punishment before their karma are settled."

"It's probably a lot of karmic debt," Wei Wuxian mumbled to himself, looking down at the four folders of the men he had hunted and hated for so long in his past life. Oddly enough, though he had harbored great hatred for them then, he felt strangely detached from them now that they were all dead. He just wanted to wash his hands clean of them to be honest.

"Yes," Zhuanlun Wang agreed. "So I think it's justified to be a *little* impartial this time round."

"Qianbei," Wei Ying whined.

"Remember our deal," Zhuanlun Wang said, completely unswayed by Wei Ying's reluctant pout.

With those words said, he turned to Xie Lian and bowed. The current ruler of Heaven returned the gesture and Zhuanlun Wang left after patting Wei Wuxian on the head. Wei Wuxian pouted for a while longer before turning to Xie Lian, as if remembering something he wanted to ask his superior.

"Dianxia, I know we're not supposed to interfere too much with the mortal world but what if answering prayers require a lot of divine intervention?" Wei Ying asked.

Xie Lian paused and contemplated his answer. It was a fair question, especially for a relatively new comer. He himself had questioned the policies of heaven many times before in his past two ascension, going against his superiors to do whatever he can to save as many lives as he could.

Thinking about it, he might not be the best deity to actually answer this question, considering his lack of regard for the rules and regulations of heaven.

"I think the best way to judge how much intervention we can give is to consider what sort of lesson we want to impart to our supplicants," he answered diplomatically.

Wei Ying contemplated his words and nodded in understanding.

So far, the younger god had been performing his duties admirably, giving judgements fairly and mercifully (when situations called for it). If Xie Lian was asked, he would say that Wei Ying was an ideal judge for the underworld; able deduce a person's character during conversation, evaluate extenuating circumstances that propelled a person to commit a sin and to weigh the most suitable reincarnation that would punish or reward a person in proportion to their actions in life.

"Let's say... what if someone desecrate or defile my temple? Would I be justified to rain punishment on their head?" asked Wei Ying, obviously non-hypothetically.

Xie Lian paused again, then he asked with a frown on his delicate brows. "Did someone defile your temple?" he asked.

Wei Ying nodded, a pout on his lips.

"What did the person or persons do?" Xie Lian asked, tilting his head to the side curiously.

"He touched himself while staring creepily at my portrait," Wei Ying answered without a pause.

Xie Lian recoiled in shock and horror. Then he answered quickly, "Yes, I think you would be justified to do so. In fact, I encourage you to do so to discourage this man from repeating his transgression."

At his encouraging answer, Wei Ying pout slowly transformed into an evil grin.

"Then, I'll do just that," he promised.

Wen Rouhan, Wen Chou and Wen Zhuliu maybe have caused him the greatest suffering, but they were dead now. They can't hurt his loved ones anymore.

But Jin Guangshan...

Well, now he's made himself fair game.

*
*

End Chapter 10

Chapter End Notes

(1) Yes, Lan Yuan is still named Lan Sizhui, because Lan Wangji will always long to be by the side of his love. Hey, give the poor guy a break. He's separated from his Wei Ying by Heaven and Hell (literally)

(2) Youming (幽冥; Yōumíng), "Serene Darkness" is the alternative name of Diyu, the underworld. I thought it fitting, so chose this name for Wei Ying's own realm in the Underworld.

(3) Xianggong - husband

Poor Xie Lian didn't realise that he just gave WY the green light to bring absolute hell to the party. lol.

Now contemplating whether I should write about the Four Wens or just skip right past it to the JGS castration/humiliation scheme.

Just the Start

Chapter Summary

Wei Ying will not be remiss in his duties but that doesn't mean that he will let Jin Guangshan off so easily. As for our most hated pervert, his nightmares have just begun.

Chapter Notes

There's a hint of one-sided Yu Ziyuan/Wen Zhuliu that is blink and miss.

Also, TRIGGER WARNING: RAPE/NON-CON of a MINOR because it's Jin Guangshan. Need I say more? It's very disconcerting, please skip if you can't take it. It start from the part when he drags a young maid into his room. Then ends when he wakes up.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

In the afterlife, the dead usually arrives stripped bare of all their transient finery, with all their gold, jewels and silks left behind after death. They come in plain, white garments with their hair down and unadorned.

When Wei Ying met up with Jiang Fengmian and Yu Ziyuan, it was the same for them, which was what surprised Wei Ying in retrospect when Yu Ziyuan had pulled out her kerchief, the same one that the god had later slipped into Jiang Cheng's hand. All mortal items must be left behind after one's passing and he could not think of any better person to give it to.

So it was unsurprising that the four high profile Wens were led into his realm dressed similarly as any other dead, equal in standing as all the others that they had tried to subjugate.

However, one notable difference was that all four of them were wearing shackles around their wrists and ankles with wooden cangues locked around their necks. This was usually reserved for unruly prisoners who attempted to fight back, though usually by the end of their sentence, they would be too downbeaten and fatigued to do much more than lift their heads. The fact that all four of them still had the wooden torture device still attached to their necks and their shackles attached to each other was very telling of their behaviours while in Diyu.

"Do they still try to fight?" Wei Wuxian asked the Ox-Head guardian who escorted them through the wooden pier connecting to the other realm, where the deity could see many souls trying to crawl away from the torturers that were flaying pieces of skin and flesh away. (It

was a gory sight that made even Wei Wuxian look away when he saw it. It brought back too many uncomfortable memories of the Burial Mounds.)

It was quite common for unruly souls to fight against coming to the Underworld for judgement. Smarter ones would make their way to the Ghost City to avoid capture but most dead would hardly have more than a mere moment before they are pulled to the afterlife.

For someone like Wen Ruohan, who never expected to die in the manner that he did, he wouldn't have enough time to register that he was dead before finding his consciousness in Diyu. Even with the strong golden core of a Chief Cultivator, he would have found it impossible to fight against the age-old guardians and gods of the Underworld, especially with arrays designed for subjugation everywhere. Even Wei Ying's own pavilion had a subjugation array. It would have been an easy task to quell Wen Ruohan and his kin given how arrogant they were of their own importance. The gods and the guardians of Diyu were used to subjugating people like them.

"No, Fuxing Zushi," rumbled the guardian respectfully, hefting his large mace onto his broad shoulder. He towered over the Wens at least 2 heads in height. "It is just a precaution."

Horse-face and Ox-Head were keepers to the gates of the Underworld (though more to keep the dead in than to keep outsiders from making unwarranted visits), so their sojourn to Youming(1) was unnecessary. However, the fact that one of the guardians of the gates was here personally to keep the four Wens in check was a clear indication that Fuxing Zushi was no small fry in the Underworld.

It was clearly a warning more than anything. A flex, so to speak.

"Wen Ruohan, Wen Xu, Wen Chao and Wen Zhuliu," Wei Wuxian called out, sitting at his elevated table where he would judge the four souls. "Come closer."

They shuffled forward, mobility limited from the shackles that were connected to their ankles, wrist and one another. Watching them, Wei Wuxian had a flashback to the slave camps that he'd found the Dafan Wens in at Qiongqi Path and a thought came to him that even in death, these Wens did not escape the fate that they had brought upon their own people.

"Lift up your faces and look at me," he commanded, tone cold and unforgiving.

The four Wens who were once the nightmare of the cultivation world lifted their heads. During the Sunshot Campaign, neither Wen Ruohan nor Wen Xu ever laid eyes on Wei Wuxian despite his infamy at raising an undead army to counter the Wen army. Wen Xu had died under Nie Mingjue's sword when Wei Wuxian had been fighting on another front, while Wen Ruohan had focused his fight entirely on Lan Xichen and Nie Mingjue before he was literally backstabbed by Jin Guangyao.

So, out of the four of them, only half of them would recognise him and only one reacted immediately upon seeing him.

Wen Chao began blubbering, tears and snot flowing down his cheeks as he collapsed onto the floor to beg for forgiveness and mercy. It lasted for an amazingly and embarrassingly long while, but Wei Wuxian's face did not change at all as Wen Chao continued blubbering apologies.

"You expect mercy when you gave none to your victims," Wei Wuxian said, completely unaffected. "Do you think you deserve any consideration at all from someone who suffered greatly because of you?"

Wen Chao just continued crying and muttering on the ground, slumped as much as the cangue would allow him.

"I can't hear you," Wei Wuxian said. "Talk louder and clearer."

"It was my father. My father made me do it," he mumbled, still unwilling to take responsibility for his own cruel actions. He looked ashamed to even look at his father while Wen Ruohan just continued to stare forward.

"Wow, what loyalty you inspire," Wei Wuxian said flatly, rolling his eyes to a disheveled Wen Ruohan, who looked nothing like his previous lofty self. Instead, he looked tired and almost...old.

"I'm actually impressed with your parenting," Wei Wuxian muttered, though loud enough for everyone to hear. "And I thought my adoptive parents were difficult, you actually surpassed them in being sucky at parenting."

"Wei Wuxian..." Wen Chao wailed. "You keep haunting me!"

"I can assure you, I have more important things to think about than you," Wei Wuxian promised, taking a sip of his tea while looking down at his paperwork. "After I killed you, you are no longer of importance to me."

Then he looked up to add wryly, "Why would I be bothered with an insignificant bug I squashed?"

Wen Chao whimpered.

"That's your thinking, right?" Wei Wuxian said. "That's what you thought when you killed all my shidi and my parents at Lotus Pier. Now I am just returning that favour."

"Wei Wuxian...the demonic cultivator."

At that, Wei Wuxian turned to the dead patriarch of the now defunct Wen Clan.

"Yes," he said.

"You are a judge of the Underworld?" Wen Ruohan rasped. Wei Ying surmised his tongue had been ripped out and grown back a hundred times prior before coming here for his voice to sound that unused.

"Yes," Wei Ying answered again.

"Fitting," the ex-Chief Cultivator commented with a nod.

"Yes, Karma works in mysterious ways. Likes to slap you in the face when you least expect it," Wei Ying said wryly. "So tell me, do you think any of you deserve mercy from lil' old me?"

"Whatever I say, it will not make a difference. Your verdict will not be affected," Wen Ruohan said in a resigned manner.

Clearly, the amount of time spent with the torturers in the 18 chambers of hell had broken the once proud Sect Leader. Perhaps feeling the pain and helplessness he had brought upon his victims a hundred times over had instilled understanding upon the dead man. If that was the case, maybe he would be able to redeem himself in his next reincarnations so that he can have the chance to be reborn as a human again.

"You are right. The sufferings you and your kin have bought upon others cannot be repaid within one lifetime. And so, you will all reincarnate as insects and livestock for the next 100 reincarnations, to die horribly and to suffer as you do so."

"100!" Wen Chao wheezed while the other three just stared blankly at Wei Wuxian, face blank and demeanor accepting.

"A fly only lives for 15 to 30 days, if you don't get eaten or killed," Wei Wuxian commented idly, retrieving his signature stamp. "It won't take long at all to live a hundred lives of suffering."

"I, myself, lived three lifetimes of suffering in one life," Wei Wuxian told them with a cold smile. No need to say who was the cause of that suffering.

"Do well in your next reincarnations(2) and when you return after your hundred lives, we will review whether your karmic debt is reduced enough so you can be reincarnated as a human again," the god declared, stamping the four folders before putting them aside for Wen Qing to file later. "If not, well, your punishment will be extended."

He did not say that even when they do reincarnate as humans, likelihood they would suffer from severe health problems, poverty and a myriad of other misfortunes as their level of karmic debt would last for generations to come.

Wen Ruohan studied him silently for a while as the other three bowed, accepting his judgement. They have already gone through nine Judges of Hell before they arrived here, so they are well aware by now that nothing could change a verdict once spoken.

"Thank you for your fair judgement, Fuxing Zushi," the ex-Sect Leader finally said, bowing as well. "We do not deserve it."

"You don't," Wei Wuxian agreed. "But it is my responsibility to do so and I will not be remiss in my duties."

Not like you did as Chief Cultivator, was implied but not spoken.

"I did what I thought was right," said Wen Ruohan. "So did you, and yet, we are all dead."

He obviously also mean to include Wei Ying amongst the dead, but his tone was not exactly defensive. Just asking what was so different between them, both so feared and vilified by the world. But now, one sits upon a dais casting judgement on the other.

"It's not wrong to do what you think it is right," Wei Wuxian answered calmly. "It is only wrong when you knowingly bring needless suffering to the innocents because of your ambitions."

"People too suffered because of your actions," Wen Ruohan replied.

"They did," Wei Wuxian confirmed, "And so I requite my debt to them by making sure that they reincarnate well."

Wen Ruohan nodded, as if understanding his words. Perhaps the man really did, perhaps not. Seeing them now though, he thought that Wen Ruohan would have a better chance at redemption than Wen Chao at least. After his subsequent 100 reincarnations, maybe he would have a chance to prove himself worthy of a new start.

Before the four left, Wen Zhuliu hesitated for a little while before he bowed low, keeping the question he clearly wanted to ask close to his heart.

"She has already reincarnated," Wei Wuxian said before Wen Zhuliu could walk away to follow the other souls.

The dead man paused again, then he nodded in understanding. Yu Ziyuan was out of his reach, just like she had always been when he was just a lowly disciple of the Zhao clan and she, the beautiful third lady of the Yu clan. They will never meet again, at least not for a hundred lifetimes.

Wei Wuxian watched as Ox-Head lead the four souls in a single file through the pier and onto the edge of Naihe Bridge where they were unshackled. After watching them drink their bowls of Meng Po's soup and cross the stone bridge, Wei Wuxian waved his hand. The wooden pier of his pavilion disconnected from Naihe Bridge and connected with Wang Xiang Tai (Home Viewing Pavilion) (3), where Wen Qing was.

As if sensing something awry, Wen Qing looked up from where she was watching A-Yuan sit in his classroom with the other cute little Lan disciples. She got up and strode down the pier, almost running. She was fearful that something had happened but the summon she heard in her head sounded calm.

Wei Wuxian just lifted the four folders to her.

"It's done. We're done with them," he said. "File them up to be reviewed after their punishment."

Wen Qing took the files and silently nodded, a picture of the perfect assistant to a god of the Underworld.

"Yes, Fuxing Zushi."

Wei Wuxian made a visit to Youdu (4) before he started his official campaign against Jin Guangshan.

Originally, he was planning to leave the man alone until he died, considering his days were numbered, but the man actually had the audacity to go into Wei Ying's temple and jerked himself off to his painting!

So gross!

He was not about to let Jin Guangshan get away with that!

Why, if any the other gods found out about it, where would Wei Ying hide his face!?

Internally complaining about it, Wei Ying landed at the front gate of Youdu and was greeted courteously by the pair of threshold guardians that were stationed there.

Despite being in eternal darkness, Youdu never slept. It was like the Ghost City in a way but instead of being filled with renegade ghosts who never made their way to the Underworld, Youdu was filled with underworld officials, celestial beings and heavenly officials who wanted to escape the formality of the heavens.

Of course, like every other cities, there were better areas and seedier ones too. The latter was where he headed to first. The lanes were narrow and dark but no one dared to approach him or even touch him as his aura and rich robes blatantly announced that he was a high-ranking official.

Wei Ying had to circle the place twice before he found the entrance of the hidden shop. He made his way in and ducked his head as not to collide with the dried monkey paws, shrunken heads and a hodgepodge of eclectic items that hung from the ceiling.

"My Lord!" greeted the shopkeeper's assistant from the counter. She was a small brown fox, smartly dressed in a set of red and brown robes, standing on her hind legs on a tall chair to look over the counter. "Welcome!"

"Mei-er," he greeted, approaching her as he spoke. "Is the shopkeeper not here today?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, sir," said the brown fox, her two little tails twitching in agitation. "But the boss just left to procure some shipment. Do you need his services?"

"Well, not his specifically," Wei Ying answered. "I actually need the services of a prankster. A fox spirit will be the best candidate, of course."

Mei-er looked interested, her ears perked up in attention. "What for, my lord?"

"A mortal has offended me but I, personally, do not have time to teach that man a lesson beyond giving him nightmares daily," Fuxing Zushi told her with a smile. "So I will pay generously for a fox spirit to follow this man during the day to give him bad luck, illusions and whatever else that can be thought of. However, he is a cultivator and would probably be able to tell if a low level being is pranking him, so I need someone who is good at concealment. A fox spirit with at least seven tails or more will suffice."

"The amount of damage caused by a seven tails will be quite substantial," the little fox said, her tails still with attentiveness. "They don't just do simple pranks, you know."

Wei Wuxian's smile was positively wicked as he said, "I give my full permission to ruin this man's life completely."

The fox spirit's tails started wagging vigorously as she leaned forward on the counter excitedly.

"I might have someone that can do it," she said eagerly, fangs glinting in the shop's candlelight. "Tell me more!"

After he finished conducting his business with the shop with no name, whose services involved procuring whatever that was difficult, impossible or ill-advised, Wei Ying headed towards the higher class areas.

It was more brightly lit in these set of streets, with lanterns, fire braziers and oil lamps at every few feet. Wei Ying had chosen to house his sister, brother-in-law and the Wens that had chosen to remain to become his attendants here because it was significantly brighter and livelier than in his own empty realm that served as his home and his workplace.

(Maybe one day, when Lan Zhan arrives, Wei Ying can finally bring himself to decorate his realm more and make it into a real home rather than just a place he had no attachment to...)

"Jiejie," he called out, knocking on a door of a mansion. The door opened but it wasn't Jiang Yanli who answered.

"Popo," he greeted as the little old lady opened her arms in welcome. He wrapped her arms around her and asked her how she had been.

Months ago, after his intervention, Wen Yuan's grandmother and the other Wen remnants arrived at the underworld to be greeted by a waiting Wen Qing, whom had been expecting all of them.

Popo, who was already in line for reincarnation, chose to stay 'just a little while longer' to watch over A-Yuan. Since she and the others were stuck at the blood pool for so long, Wei Ying hadn't felt like arguing with them. So most of the Wen remnants had moved on, but

Popo, Uncle Four and a few others had stayed as the servants and attendants associated with Youming.

"I heard about Wen Ruohan," Popo said as they walked in together into the mansion where the staff of Youming all resided in. "Everything has been settled then?"

"Yes," he confirmed. "Hopefully by the time they return from their reincarnations, they would have learned to redeem themselves."

Popo hummed amiably, neither agreeing or disagreeing.

"Have you seen A-Yuan?" she asked. She had met with A-Yuan in his dreams before via Weigongzi's magic and she could go to the Home Viewing Pavilion to see A-Yuan, of course. But she craved more than that, she wanted to touch her grandson, having been separated from that beloved child for so long.

However, she was dead now, and in a better place than that dreadful blood pool even, so she would have to make do with knowing that Wei Ying, who cared for A-Yuan as much as a parent did, personally visits A-Yuan on the sly regularly.

"Yes, he's growing so well," Wei Ying said, patting her arm soothingly before gushing over A-Yuan's achievements. "I think he's gained at least 3 stones since the last time I saw him. And he showed me all the words that he had learned. He's so smart, popo! He's already learning how to play the guqin from his Bobo. Once Hanguang-jun comes out from his seclusion, I'm sure Lan Zhan will take over with the lessons."

Popo felt an immediate sense of relief that A-Yuan seemed to be well cared for by the Lans, no matter their role in the Wen Remnants' destruction.

"Don't worry, Popo," Wei Ying said, "My Lan Zhan loves A-Yuan like he is his own son."

"Of course," Popo says, nodding in agreement. No man of Hanguang-jun's status would take a child, who he had only known for a day, and claim him as his own without truly loving that child wholeheartedly.

They reached the inner courtyard where Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan lived. Coincidentally, the person that Wei Ying was looking for was in the pond, wading amongst the darkly coloured lotuses, still trying to grow pink lotuses for his wife.

Jin Zixuan was dressed in dark clothes customary to those who live in Youdu. He had long since shed the golden finery after his death and swore that he would never again wear that colour even when he had the chance to choose his own garments, especially after he found out what his father did and how his death was machinated by his own brother.

Wei Wuxian's impression of the peacock (which was just a nickname instead of an insult at this point) soared after Jin Zixuan dug a pond in the courtyard by himself, in an attempt to grow Jiang Yanli lotuses. It was supposed to be impossible to grow things in the Underworld but Wei Wuxian, being somewhat an amalgamation of life and death decided to help out by coaxing a little life into the barren soil of the Underworld.

However, unexpectedly, the flowers were all either black or dark shades of red and purple. They were still pretty and Jiang Yanli was very happy with them but Jin Zixuan wanted to grow pink lotuses, which was his wife's favourites. Even after three years of trying, he was still unwilling to let it go.

As a former Yunmeng disciple who truly believed in achieving the impossible, Wei Ying approved.

"Jin Zixuan," he called out.

His brother-in-law lifted his head, tendrils of hair falling to his forehead and eyes. He looked far from the spoiled, naive young master that he once was, and in Wei Ying's opinion, that was a marked improvement. He certainly was way more deserving of being his sister's husband now.

"What is it?" Jin Zixuan asked, looking worried.

"Would you like to see your mother?" Wei Ying asked his Jin Zixuan, whose confused frown melted away immediately.

"Yes, please!"

Jin Guangshan was having a terrible day.

Actually, he'd been having a terrible week.

Every night for the past week, he dreamt of nothing but the dead clawing at him screaming of pain and regret. Sometimes, in his dreams, everything was dark and he could hardly see anything but flashes of human souls being tortured by animal-headed monsters. He would wonder what this all meant if his head wasn't throbbing from a headache. He barely slept since he kept waking up from his nightmares.

Last night was the worst.

It had started out so very good. He had a pretty whore riding him so well that she passed out in his bed as he laid, sated. When he pushed her onto her back for another round while she slept, he discovered her face melting off, revealing part of her skull and round eyeballs rolling in the sockets.

Horried, he released the limp girl who fell back onto the bed while he recoiled from her.

It was only when he looked again that he realised that in his fatigue, he had been hallucinating or something. The pretty girl was still sleeping and her face was not melting from her skull.

Still, the memory of it killed him hard on and he got dressed to leave.

But when he stepped out of the room, the scene outside made him freeze.

Outside the room, the brothel was still crowded with customers and prostitutes but instead of human faces, they all had animal heads. And instead of talking like humans, they grunted, snarled, growled and barked at each other.

Jin Guangshan rubbed his eyes and looked again but the scene did not change.

There were still animal-headed people soliciting inside the brothel.

In fact, one fancily dressed wild boar with a voluptuous female body approached him and touched his arm, grunting and snorting at him loudly. There were long wicked tusks protruded from her lower lip and as the boar open its mouth, frothy drool spat out and leaked all over.

He wrenched his arm away from her in disgust and scrambled out of the brothel like he was being chased by hell hounds.

Back at the brothel, the confused madam wondered why the Jin Sect Leader, who was one of her best customer, was running like a bat out of hell.

Had he gone insane?

Thinking he had been drinking too much, Jin Guangshan had immediately returned home to sleep the night away, hoping that he would not see another monster in his dreams or otherwise.

Fortunately, everyone back at Koi Tower looked like normal people. They bowed to him in deference and greeted him with respect, as they should.

All was well again.

Or so he thought.

When he finally fell asleep after his disconcerting 'adventure', he ended in a room full of beautiful women clamoring to pleasure him. He was drowning in bliss until the women's skin turned black and started flaking off, revealing festering wounds that was dripping thick, viscous black blood.

Jin Guangshan tried to pull away but he was surrounded and the women pulled at his limbs, scratching at him with their long fingernails and biting him with sharp teeth. He screamed when one of them grabbed his manhood and pulled, long nails digging deep into the sensitive flesh.

He tried to use his spiritual energy to get them away from him but instead, the exertion seemed to drive them into a frenzy. The women dug their nails into his flesh and pulled him in different directions, as if they were trying their best to keep a piece of him to themselves.

He screamed at them to let go, to leave him be, to disappear but they pulled and pulled until they rendered him apart like an old rag doll.

He could feel his cock get torn off with a hard yank, his right forearm dislocate and pulled till all the tendons and muscles gave way, his left shoulder disconnect from his body and finally, with a twist and a pull, his head being torn off his neck.

He was still screaming and screaming...

Until he woke up.

The morning after was miserable for him as he stumbled out of his bed, tired and aching.

After a day suffering from his throbbing headache, bone-aching fatigue and unfulfilled libido, Jin Guangshan shoved all his work onto his worthless son before leaving to go find some women whose lap he could sleep on but before he could leave Koi Tower, he spotted his wife sitting in a pavilion having breakfast.

She looked happy, smiling as she drank her tea.

Crazy woman, Jin Guangshan thought to himself as he stalked away. *What is there to smile about!?*

She hasn't smiled since Zixuan died, so what was she so happy about!? Their son was still dead!

He managed to grab a young pretty maid, whom he dragged into his room. The girl trembled as he told her to sit down on his bed so that he could sleep on her thighs. She was a small thing and her thighs were thin and barely enough to cushion his head with, and so, after a moment of lying on the bed, he decided '*Fuck it. I need to spend myself first.*'

He pulled the girl down and tore at her clothes as she cried and begged him to stop. He ignored her as he reached down to finger her hole. It was tight and dry. She was clearly a young virgin as she barely had any hair growing at her snatch.

Instead of being recoiled by her obvious youthfulness, he became excited, cock hardening at the thought of ramming himself into the tight heat and tearing her hymen. He pulled his erection out eagerly and smeared the precum to lubricate his cock. Then he lined himself to the struggling girl's hole and thrust.

Rather than pleasure, pain shot through his cock, as if someone had bitten right into the flesh of his erection.

He screamed at the intense agony and tried to pull out but doing that only intensifies the pain as the *teeth* hung on as if they had clamped onto his cock like vise. He looked down to see blood gushing from the girl's swollen folds.

When he looked back up, the girl who had been crying and screaming before he penetrated her was now laughing with a manic look on her face. Her eyes were bulging and bloodshot, her teeth sharp, long and thin like a thousand needles. Her limbs, which were willowy before, was now long and stick-like as they wrapped around him, pulling him closer to her embrace.

"Didn't you want this?" she asked, voice thin and whispery, long slimy tongue licking the side of his face before entering his ear.

He was still screaming, even though no one came to his aid. No one will. They knew better than to approach his rooms whenever someone sees him dragging one of the maids into his room. It was plausible deniability. If no one was present, there would be no witnesses and therefore, no proof.

Knowing that didn't stop Jin Guangshan from continuing to scream though.

Especially when the girl, no, monster bit into his cheek, digging into his flesh like it was a delicious meal.

Soon, the pain on his cock was so severe that he blacked out.

When he awoke, he was sitting at the dining table with his wife having dinner.

For a moment, Jin Guangshan was disorientated.

He was sure he had been in his bedroom, having his way with one of the maids-

No, she was a monster.

He patted himself, even going so far as checking if his dick was still intact.

"What are you doing!?"

At that angry voice, Jin Guangshan looked at his wife who was glaring at him horrendously. His wife used to be such a beauty, but now, he thought that she was the ugliest woman he had ever had the misfortune of setting his eyes on.

Then, she tsk-ed at him and looked away, the frown on her brows clearing.

"Never mind, I can't be bothered with you," she said. "I'm in a good mood and I won't let your perversity distract me."

Jin Guangshan snorted, picking up his own tea. As he sipped the bitter concoction, he brushed off the stupid dream about that monstrous maid away. Surely, his fatigue had resulted in hallucinations. Perhaps he should consult the physicians for some sleeping draught. It should deter him from dreaming.

"Last night, I had a dream of meeting Fuxing Mushi," Madam Jin said, looking wistful and contented. "A-Xuan and A-Li was with her. They told me that they are doing well and are watching over us."

That was official. His wife had lost her mind. Speaking of goddesses as if they cared enough to answer prayers through dreams and dead sons visiting the living.

Jin Guangshan was about to say so aloud when his wife turned to him.

"I will be going to the Temple of Moon and Stars tomorrow," she declared. "To give thanks and offerings for answering my prayers."

Remembering the painting of the beautiful goddess, Jin Guangshan was suddenly compelled to say, "I will go with you."

Madam Jin squinted at him in suspicion, but seemed disinclined to comment on his sudden need to seek spiritual guidance.

"Suit yourself," she said, knowing that she couldn't stop the Sect Leader from doing anything he wanted anyway. Case in point, him showing up at her pavilion suddenly to demand dinner.

After dinner, Jin Guangshan sauntered to his own chambers, thoughts still circulating around the Goddess of the Moon and Stars.

Was his recent slew of nightmares a result of his previous visit to her temple?

When he had touched himself in front of her painting?

Did he offend her?

His nightmares also seemed so real. At least, the pain was.

Jin Guangshan took a moment to spread his senses but detected no malicious intent or resentful energy around. The only spiritual energies around were his disciples patrolling outside. Furthermore, there were protection arrays around Koi Tower that prevented evils beings from entering the premise.

But if it was a goddess...

Jin Guangshan shook his head. There was no possibility that a celestial deity would be so easily offended by him enjoying her beauty.

Right?

Still, he thought of maybe building a temple in Jinlintai as well for the beautiful goddess. It wouldn't hurt to make a luxurious offering to her. Surely, the deity would look upon him benevolently for it and bless with him good dreams and luck.

When he brought that up to that *boy* about his desire to open a temple, he looked surprised.

"Who will the temple be dedicated to?" Jin Guangyao asked.

"Fuxing Mushi," he answered, tipping his cup of wine into his mouth as his other hand roamed the smooth skin of the whore beside him. He was so focused on the pretty whore that he didn't notice the alarm on Jin Guangyao's face.

"Father, I do not think it is advisable-"

Annoyed at the protest, Jin Guangshan threw the cup in his hand at the boy, who ducked in time to avoid it from smashing in his face.

"Did I ask your opinion!?" he bellowed, standing up to smack the whore's son in the face.
"Shut up and do as you're told!"

With that, he grabbed the whore from his chair and dragged her towards his room, still determined to drain his balls despite the horrid dream he had that morning.

Jing Guangyao stood where he was left behind, face burning from both the slap and the embarrassment of being admonished so terribly by his father.

*
*

End Chapter 11

In case anyone wants to know what a wooden cangue looks like:



(1) Just a reminder that Youming (幽冥; Yōumíng), "Serene Darkness" is the alternative name of Diyu, the underworld. I thought it fitting to chose this name for Wei Ying's own realm in the Underworld.

(2) Reincarnations as animals to settle karmic debts might seem impossible but even animals can do acts of kindness and virtue. I seem to remember a story of a Queen who reincarnated into a crane. She was informed by a Heavenly being that if she did not kill anything for the duration of her lifetime as a crane, she will be reincarnated to a human again. So the crane ate nothing but dead fish and dead shellfish until she died. I might have gotten it wrong but the idea is there.

(3) Wang Xiang Tai (望乡台; 望鄉臺; Wàng Xiāng Tái), "Home-Viewing Pavilion", a pavilion every soul passes by on his/her journey to the Underworld. From there, they can see their families and loved ones in the world of the living present time.

(4) Youdu (Chinese: 幽都; pinyin: Yōu Dū), the capital city of Diyu, generally conceived as being similar to a typical Chinese capital city, such as Chang'an, but surrounded by and pervaded with darkness.

FYI, the idea that WY employed a fox spirit to hound JGS during the daytime is something that was inspired by the Canonisation of the Deities. King Zhou offended Lady Nuwa greatly by writing an insulting poem on the wall of her temple and so she sent a fox spirit, a pipa spirit and a pheasant spirit to seduce him and destroy him/his kingdom. This way, WY can still work and keep an eye on his loved ones while still plotting to put the Jin Clan in their place. Poor Fuxing Zushi is very busy, ya know.

Also, Vagina Dentata- the perfect punishment for rapists.

P.S. The suffering has begun!!! mwahahahaha. Yup. The fox spirit hired was just getting warmed up.

In the Midst

Chapter Summary

Jin Guang Yao thinks that he deserves better. And Jin Guangshan is currently being treated like a ball to be smacked around by a beloved pet. Wei Ying regrets watching. Not as much as Jin Zixuan though.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Jin Guangyao was not having a good day.

In fact, he was not having a good week.

Firstly, A-Su had informed him of her pregnancy and though the two of them had planned it, the realisation of it was still nerve-wrecking.

When they broke the news to her father, Sect Leader Qin nearly killed him for it. He was only deterred from it by the presence of his adamant daughter that she didn't want to be a single mother. It had taken hours before the man finally conceded to let him take responsibility and marry his daughter.

Now, when he was about to speak to his father about the wedding, his father barely cared and diverted his attention on wanting to open a temple. And not just any temple, it had to be a temple for Fuxing Mushi, who might or might not be the female rendition of Yiling Laozu!

Jin Guangyao had heard of stirrings of rumours about the Yiling Laozu's revival two years ago, but it had all been nothing but hearsay as he did not obtain any proof from his contacts. Then, the chatter turned to Yiling Patriarch returning as a god. In response, he'd sent people to Yiling, where talk had circulated about a Fuxing Zushi who helps the common people.

At first, he was unsure if he should curtail the rumours but after the initial spread of the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal's influence, he decided to counter it by spreading more rumours about the Yiling Laozu being a demonic cultivator masquerading as Fuxing Zushi.

He thought that with this new information, the worship of the new god would taper. Instead, what happened was that the rumour split the identities of the Yiling Laozu and Fuxing Zushi.

Yiling Laozu became a demon, feared by all including other demons and ghosts. But Fuxing Zushi, by some miracle, became the benevolent god that went above and beyond the heavens to extend a helping hand to any and all. Most commoners didn't even know that they were the same entity and did not seem to want to accept the fact either.

Jin Guangyao didn't understand why it didn't work. The two identities were antithesis of each other and yet, however much his contacts tried to curb the influence of the god in the other sects, Wei Wuxian's influence just kept spreading, especially in Qinghe and Yunmeng. He suspected that Jiang Wanyin had something to do with it, especially with the construction of the new temples around Lotus Pier.

But it couldn't be.

The mere mention of his brother made the Jiang Sect Leader scowl terribly and he always looked ready to fight someone about it. There was no way he would support the worship of his brother...

And now, to his horror, his father actually wants to build a temple in honor of the female version of the man he had condemned to death!

And he didn't even want to listen to Jin Guangyao's explanation!

His cheek throbbed at the memory of the slap he endured from his father. It didn't hurt so much as physically as it did emotionally, though it shouldn't by now, considering how often his father and Madam Jin abused him.

Still, he couldn't help but wonder what his mother thought of him now, bowing and scrapping daily for a mere fraction of his father's regard. Surely, she didn't want for this to happen when she beseeched her son to present himself to his sire. Surely, she meant for better things for her A-Yao. Surely, she wouldn't want him to be abused and be spit upon merely for the fact that he breathed.

Surely, it would be better if father was gone.

Surely, mother would understand why that had to happen in order for Jin Guangyao to become the man he was meant to be. With Jin Guangshan as his collar and shackle, he would never be able to achieve the greatness that he knew he could.

Jin Guangshan couldn't even be bothered with his wedding!

After he had spent years convincing Qin Cangye to let him have the hand of his precious daughter, all Jin Guangshan would say to him about it was to arrange his wedding to coincide with the upcoming Discussion Conference.

In two and a half months!

Why?

According to Jin Guangshan, since all the Sect Leader would be there, the invitation to the wedding will not inconvenience anyone.

Inconvenience! His wedding was an inconvenience!

Yes, A-Su was pregnant and the rushed wedding would not make it too obvious that she was carrying, but still, the words that came out of his illustrious sect leader's mouth made him grit

his teeth and clench his fist.

Fine! Jin Guangyao decided.

If his father wanted so much to catch the attention of the deity he had essentially ordered killed, then Jin Guangshan would have to reap what he himself sowed.

Jin Guangshan was enjoying himself with the whore when it happened.

He was thrusting into the whore from behind while she was on her hands and knees like a bitch. He even told her as much.

She moaned and groaned.

"You really are the perfect whore," he jeered at her. "You love being fucked, don't you?"

She groaned again and then, turned her head.

She turned her head so much he could hear the cracking of the bones in her neck as it popped out of place so that her head could turn 180 degree to look directly at him. Jin Guangshan stopped thrusting but no sound came out of his mouth as he stared at the abomination in horror.

"I love it," she said gleefully, opening her mouth full of sharp teeth to grin at him, eyes bulging and tears of blood streaming down her cheeks.

When he still couldn't bring himself to reply, she continued.

"A-Shan, why did you stop, I was enjoying it," her voice was discordant, a tone overlapped with another. It was a jarring sound that made him recoil, pulling out of her and scrambling back the bed. But the thing followed, moving awkwardly as she maneuvered around her backward limbs.

"A-Shan, don't you love me?" she rasped, her body turning with unnerving cricks and cracks on her neck. Her head did not move at all. "You said you'll give me what I want."

"What- what do you want!?" he shouted at her, throwing a hand out at her.

She screamed as his sword flew from its stand and into her.

The illusion broke. Like a mirror splintering into millions of shards.

Jin Guangshan blinked from his kneeling position behind the whore, hard cock still in her.

What in the world happened? he wondered as he looked around, but everything looked exactly as it should be.

"My lord," the whore beneath him moaned. "Please, please."

Still perplexed, he continued thrusting into her, looking down at the completely normal figure of the woman he was fucking.

Then, a banging on his door started, followed by a wail.

It shocked Jin Guangshan so much that he straightened to stare at the doors. He paused and waited.

Sure enough, after a moment of silence, the door began shaking uncontrollably.

Alarmed, he pulled out of the whore and grabbed his robes. He put it on haphazardly and grabbed his sword. The whore that laid on his bed watched him with wide eyes, shock clear on her face.

He grabbed the trembling door and flung it open, hoping to catch the perpetrator in the act.

But there was no one in the hall at all.

The door had also stopped trembling. Inspecting the hallway and the door in confusion, he found no reason the door would shake so terribly. Also, what was that wailing?

He slammed the door shut and returned to his bed, confused. After a moment of hesitation, the whore slithered into his lap and started mouthing his cock. But just as he got into the mood again, the banging started again. This time, the wailing continued in a long trailing note.

He pushed the woman off and grabbed his sword, unmindful of his state of undress with his robes wide open on the front and his cock swinging about.

He slammed the door open...

...And once again found no one.

He slammed the door closed and fuming, went back to his woman for the night. He was rough with her as he maneuvered her onto her hands and knees to mount her like a dog again.

But just as he got a rhythm going, the banging started again, this time the door rattling so hard that it looked as if it was about to shake out of its hinges.

"Who is it!?" he shouted, now supremely annoyed with the repeated interruption. He pulled out again and with a growl, got off the bed. The whore on his bed looked surprised and scared. "Get lost!"

"Sect Leader Jin, there is no one knocking on the door," the whore said, a pleading tone to her voice.

He stared at her, unable to comprehend her words. "What do you mean? Can't you hear the banging and the wailing?"

She shook her head cautiously.

"Are you deaf!?" he shouted, his throbbing headache now even worse.

She shook her head and wisely kept quiet in the face of the sect leader's anger.

Throughout all of this, the banging and the rattling didn't stop. The door was being manhandle so roughly that it should have collapsed by then.

Instead, it was Jin Guangshan who delivered the the final blow to the door, kicking it so hard that it splintered into pieces.

Outside, there was no one.

Outraged by the sight, Jin Guangshan screamed.

It was then that his guards actually showed up, alarmed by the shouts of their sect leader.

"Useless! All of you!" he raged at them, the vein at his temple throbbing. He couldn't think straight with all the buzzing in his ears and the windows were now rattling. "Stop! STOP!"

"Sect Leader!"

"Sir! Please calm down!"

"Call the physician!"

The voices all blended together, the shouts of his disciple and the screams of the whore seemed to multiply till it filled his ears. He flipped the table, splintering it against a window.

"SHUT UP!!!"

Then, static.

It went dark.

Jin Guangshan came to with his head on the whore lap, having his hair combed by the woman's gentle but clever hands.

"My Lord, you were so good," crooned the woman. "Yi-er has never been so pleased before."

Jin Guangshan sat up, confused. He looked around the room, realising that he was in his room. The door was intact and quiet. The windows and table too.

Was it all a dream?

Did he have a qi deviation?

He got up and approached the window. He opened it and realised that it was night now and even though the fires had been lit, there were no one around.

Where were the patrols?

Was he in a dream? A nightmare?

He didn't know what was real anymore.

It was unnerving.

Was he in an unending dream?

Was he stuck in an illusion?

He drew a talisman in the air to break any illusions that was in his vicinity and there was a pop.

"Haiya, I was hoping that you wouldn't do that," a voice hissed behind him.

Jin Guangshan turned around and the whore that was on the bed was now a large, long limbed creature. His eyes widened as he took in the spindly limbs spilling over the bed, tiny black hairs sticking out like thorns. Her face was long and thin but the most horrendous part of her features were her eyes. Large red eyes with thousands, maybe millions of compartments.

As she untangled her many limbs, Jin Guangshan realised then that she was a giant spider, her voluptuously body separated by segments resembling that of an arachnid. When she rose to her full height, her eight limbs spread out to support the weight of her giant body, she towered over him, her shape taking a majority of his room.

"Stay- Stay away!"

The spider woman tsked. "All those girls say the same to you but you never listen. What makes you think you have any right to say that to me now?"

Jin Guangshan called for his sword but before it could reach him, the spider smacked it away, ignoring the burn of the spiritual weapon on her skin. It sliced deep into the wall, on the far end of the room.

"Do you really think that would work?" she crackled as her head tilted unnaturally to the side, long black hair trailing down to cover her manic grin. "I may not have ascended yet but I'm no small fry."

Jin Guangshan was too shocked to say anything beyond scrambling to escape but the spider barred his escape by spitting sticky webs on the windows and the door.

She licked her lips, "When Xiao Qi asked me to help seduce you for some fun, I was skeptical on what fun was to be had on a mere mortal like you. But I can see the appeal. It is fun! The terror on your face is exquisite!"

She crackled, limbs stretching across the ceiling as she towered over a trembling Jin Guangshan. "Xiao Qi says I can't eat you until we are done with you, but I can at least have a taste, right?"

Before Jin Guangshan could even escape, she fell onto him, grabbing him tightly with her clawed hands and sinking her fangs into his neck.

He screamed.

Jin Guangshan woke up in a carriage decorated in gold furnishing, rocking with the movement as he regained his full awareness.

What? Where was he?

He patted himself and loosened his collar to look down at himself where the spider woman had bitten him but there was no bite. There was no bruises at all where the spider demon had grasped him with her claw-like hands.

He didn't know what was real anymore.

Jin Guangshan dug his fingers into his hair and pulled at his ponytail, thoughts whirling around like a vortex. He felt like he couldn't even trust his own eyes or ears or any of his sense anymore.

The carriage, which he somehow identified as his sect's despite his mental turmoil, slowed down and he looked out to see the Temple of the Moon and Stars that he had visited with his wife a week ago.

When he exited the carriage, his wife gave him a side-eye, taking in his disheveled hair and unkempt collar.

"Do you have a woman in there!?" she asked, incredulous.

"None of your business," he snapped at her, temper short and frayed now. *Cunt*, he thought to himself as he stormed up the steps, leaving his fuming wife behind.

The temple was as calm and quiet as his previous visit, with only the chants of the monks and the rustling clothes breaking the complete silence as the worshippers went about their prayers.

The air was thick with sandalwood incense and the smell of water soaked with essence of lotus flowers.

Merchants were there too, praying to their patron god for good fortune (1) and protection.

But all that didn't matter for Jin Guangshan, whose eyes fell immediately on the painting of the smiling goddess.

She still looked as beautiful as he remembered. With her voluptuous figure and welcoming smile, Jin Guangshan wondered if there was any beauty out there in the world that could rival that of the Goddess of the Moon and Stars.

After what happened the last few days, he really shouldn't be thinking all these things nor want what he clearly couldn't.

But he couldn't help himself...

Especially when the painting started beckoning to him, a coy smile on the goddess' exquisite face.

"A-Shan," she beckoned again, "Come."

He went, going closer to her altar.

She took a step forward, exiting the painting to step onto the altar.

Jin Guangshan raised his arms to catch her trim waist so that he could lift her from the altar. She was as light as air and smelled just like lotuses. Her touch was soft and gentle as she caressed his face.

"A-Shan," she whispered.

He set her down to sit on the altar and knelt at her feet in supplication.

"My goddess," he whispered in worship.

She laughed, head tilting back to show off her long swan-like neck.

Then the goddess lifted a foot to caress his thigh. Jin Guangshan moaned as her slippered foot went upwards to gently press against his hardening cock.

"Show me how much you love me," she crooned.

And he did. Breathing heavily in excitement, Jin Guangshan unlaced his pants and took out his cock to palm it eagerly before her foot stepped onto his member, so hard that he shouted as a mind-blowing orgasm came over him.

"Sect Leader Jin!"

Jin Guangshan came back to himself just as he spilled into his own hands.

"What are you doing!?"

"Oh Heavens!"

All around him, worshippers were cowering away from him, including his wife and her attendants, hands raised up to cover their faces with their sleeves. Their expressions were prominently etched with intense disgust, horror, embarrassment and outrage.

"Sect Leader Jin!" exclaimed the Head Monk as he came into the prayer hall, an acolyte running after him. The poor boy had run out of the hall to get him when Jin Guangshan started hallucinating and taking his pants off.

For his part, Jin Guangshan was coming to the realisation that he had been caught in an illusion where the goddess in the painting came alive to pleasure him. He pulled at his pants, face growing red with shame, confusion and anger.

WHO? Who did this to him!?

A worshipper threw the burning incense she were carrying at him, the embers burning his face and making him drop his pants again.

"GET OUT!"

"What an embarrassment!"

"How disgusting!"

"Lecher! Defiling a temple like that!"

"Gross!"

"How dare you!?"

Stumbling away from the outright hostility directed at him, he rubbed the ashes from the incense away from his eyes as he turned to flee the temple. He nearly tripped over the threshold and actually did trip over his own pants after that.

Then, down he went, over the staircase of the temple.

Wei Wuxian's face was frozen in an expression of horror and disgust. Beside him, Wen Qing mirrored his expression as the two of them stared into his personal viewing pool.

"I... did NOT need to see that," he said with complete revulsion.

"Did you... tell Xiao Qi to do that...?" she asked, unable to pull her eyes away from the wreck that was about to happen. On the reflection of the still water, Jin Guangshan was being shamed out of the temple that he had just sullied with his seed.

"No!" Wei Wuxian answered vehemently. "I would NEVER condone to having my temple defiled like that!"

He paused and then continued. "Or anyone's temple."

"Good," Wen Qing said, taking satisfaction in seeing Jin Guangshan trip over his pants and roll down the staircase. She found herself wishing that the staircase was as long as the ostentatious one in Koi Tower. "You better speak to that fox spirit about it. Warn her never to do something so disrespectful again."

"Yes," Wei Wuxian concurred. He knew he gave the fox spirit his permission to do all she wanted to destroy Jin Guangshan's reputation but if he didn't at least warn her about this matter, she might just take it as permission to do more atrocious things in his temple or worse, at other temples. Other gods were not so forgiving.

Then he turned to look at Wen Qing, "I am SO glad A-jie is not here right now."

"Yes," Wen Qing agreed. "Considering how Jin Zixuan is reacting..."

He blinked at her and turned to look around. "Where's Jin Zixuan?"

"Sitting in a corner, ashamed of his father and regretting everything," she answered without even looking at the poor man curled up in a ball and hiding his face from embarrassment.

Wei Wuxian winced in sympathy. "Brother-in-law, I think you should go back to the house for today."

Jin Zixuan made a sound between an affirmative and a whimper.

"It's okay. It's not your fault your father is a lecherous asshole," he consoled, not moving from his spot. He didn't think that Jin Zixuan would appreciate being hugged by him right now. "Go home. A-Jie will make you feel better."

Leaving Jin Zixuan to sort himself out and untangle himself from his corner when he was ready, Wei Wuxian turned back to the pool to watch Jin Guangshan cover his face as he entered the carriage that would take him back to Jinlintai.

Unfortunately for the Jin Sect Leader, at that moment, the wheel of the carriage broke and the reins of the horses snapped simultaneously. The horses, tamed and bridled, uncharacteristically ran away in a panic and the carriage collapsed partially to the side, throwing the cargo inside onto the carriage wall.

Jin Guangshan poked his head out and shouted in confusion, drawing in a crowd. By now, the worshippers from inside the temple had run out and they started telling the bystanders what had just transpired inside. Seeing that, Jin Guangshan clamped his mouth shut quickly and withdrew his head in to hide.

Then, just as the carriage driver was figuring out how to fix the wheel, Madam Jin appeared, looking thunderously livid.

She went into Jin Guangshan's carriage, even though she had her own, and a very loud, very public, argument ensued. Wei Wuxian reckoned that there were probably a couple of slaps and punches involved.

When Madam Jin emerged from her carriage, she looked pristine and spotless, though red-faced still with anger and embarrassment. She headed to her carriage and before she left, she apologised to the Head Monk and offered a huge donation, which the Head Monk rejected.

Wei Wuxian felt a little bad about it, knowing that the Jin Sect Madam feared that her husband's actions would anger Fuxing Mushi. He turned to Jin Zixuan, who finally untangled himself to look down at his mother.

"You can see her later when she's asleep," Wei Wuxian said to his brother-in-law, trying to console him again.

Jin Zixuan nodded. "Sorry about my fath... Jin Guangshan."

"Don't apologise for the actions of another person. You are not responsible for an adult who is your senior," Wei Wuxian said, waving a hand. "Besides, I was the one who sent the fox spirit."

"If he wasn't so..." Jin Zixuan gestured, unable to find the word for it. "Then he wouldn't have fallen for it so easily."

Jin Zixuan sighed, looking ashamed for having such a man as his father. Wei Wuxian patted him on the shoulder in sympathy.

"I am so glad A-Yu is not at Koi Tower," Jin Zixuan said, in regards to his younger brother. "Or any of the others."

As a favour to him, Wei Ying had gone out of his way to locate all of Jin Guangshan's progenies. Mo Xuanyu was given directions and instructions to offer help and sanctuary at Wei Wuxian's temples if his siblings were stuck in bad circumstances like his own horrid family situation. The ones who did not need help found themselves experiencing a windfall instead.

Now, the only problem Wei Ying was facing, however, was the situation with Qin Su.

Given the circumstances of her conception, her pregnancy now and Madam Qin's current poor health, revealing the truth would be detrimental to both Qin Su and her mother.

Wei Ying felt a little guilty about it, but the wedding between Jin Guangyao and Qin Su, would have to happen, if only to save her reputation and to keep the parentage of the child in her belly a secret.

However, beyond that...

Divorces do happen for many reasons.

The news of the disgusting conduct of the Jin Sect Leader went far and wide, going as far as to Caiyi Town and beyond.

When Lan Wangji finally exited seclusion to visit the town with his son in his arms, it was all anyone would talk about. No one even seemed to notice that their lauded Second Jade of Lan was strolling around with his illegitimate son, which was preferable to Lan Wangji of course.

Half way through buying A-Yuan another toy, a presence made itself known beside him.

"This is why I always say that you spoil Yuanyuan."

Lan Wangji spun around, heart jumping in his chest, not from shock but from happiness at that beloved voice. A-Yuan also reacted similar, calling out in delight, "A-Niang!"

"A-Yuan! My baby!" Wei Ying returned happily, plucking A-Yuan from Lan Wangji's arms and cuddling his son close. "Have you been a good boy?"

"Yes!" A-Yuan chirped in reply, with complete honesty.

"Oh, you are such a precious boy," Wei Ying cooed, looking absolutely besotted with his child. If any outsider were to see Fuxing Zushi right now, they would have thought that HE was a doting father and not Lan Wangji.

"Wei Ying, why are you here?" Lan Wangji asked.

"Hm? Because I wanted to spend my day with my son and husband," Wei Ying answered easily, looking down at the toy A-Yuan was pointing out.

"Lady Wen allowed you to leave?" Lan Wangji asked.

"Lan Zhan! Are you trying to imply that I'm playing hooky!?" Wei Ying gasped, looking sincerely wounded. Unfortunately for him, Lan Wangji had known him since they were 16 when Wei Ying was a rule-breaking, headache-inducing rebel.

Actually, Wei Ying never grew out of it.

He just got better at it.

Lan Wangji leveled him a stern stare and Wei Ying sighed in exasperation.

"Yes, she let me off after I finished my weekly quota. She said I deserved the rest after what happened with Jin Guangshan," Wei Ying explained, picking up a stuffed toy in the shape of a fierce tiger. Lan Yuan looked entirely too happy to receive it. The vendor even more so with the payment from Lan Wangji.

"Jin Guangshan, he-" Lan Wangji asked, a brewing storm in his head as he waited for an answer from his spouse.

"Aiyo, it's not a big deal-"

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji interrupted, knowing that his Wei Ying wanted to brush off the incident. Despite trying to project an air of nonchalance, he knew that what Jin Guangshan had done threw Wei Ying off and had truly upset him.

Wei Ying sighed. "He defiled my temple in Langya and I'm punishing him for it."

Lan Wangji stopped and waited, even though in truth, he wanted to unsheathe his sword and fly to Lanling in search of said Sect Leader to castrate the unworthy scum.

"Lan Zhan, promise you won't do anything at the Discussion Conference," Wei Ying said quickly, grasping his arm. "He's getting punished even as we speak. When the time comes, he will get his due."

Lan Wangji kept quiet, still silently brewing, still murderous, though he kept it all in his heart.

Wei Ying, who knew him better than anyone else in the world, even more than his brother now, just sighed and touched his face gently.

"A-Zhan," Wei Ying whispered. "My light, the love of my life (and death), you will not interfere in heavenly retribution, will you?"

"No," Lan Wangji allowed out sullenly.

"Good, because I want my Hanguang-jun to be above vengeance," Wei Ying said, placing a placid A-Yuan in his arms and spinning around to head down the street. "Leave the pettiness to the expert."

Lan Yuan, now cuddling his tiger plushie and chewing gently on one ear, patted his father's cheek in consolation, as if knowing Lan Wangji's exasperation.

Wei Ying waited for them in front of a restaurant, citing that his Yuanyuan needs food and A-Yuan chirped out an agreement.

As they ate, the surrounding patrons were still chatting about the hot gossip surrounding Jin Guangshan. Wei Ying was putting all his attention on A-Yuan and his food, seemingly ignoring the general public, but Lan Wangji knew that Wei Ying was listening to the chatter.

"My cousin was telling me that his thing was flapping around as he ran out of the temple," a man was telling his friend with a laugh. "I heard he was a pervert but to do that in public!"

His friend's mouth curled in disgust, "The poor Madam. Imagine being married to him."

"Imagine being in the same house as him," countered the man. "Any pretty maids there will be scared being in close proximity to the pervert."

"It's not surprising considering the claims that has been going around lately," said another patron, a merchant who had just left Koi Tower.

"What? What did you hear?" asked his companion, eager for more gossip, fresh from the den of snakes. All around the table, conversation were still had but it was notably softer as everyone in the restaurant listened in on the merchants' private conversation.

"I heard that women were coming out from the woodwork to demand justice for being assaulted by the Jin Sect cultivators at Koi Tower. It isn't just the sect leader. Many of the women were pointing out a load of the other cultivators as well. Seneschal Jin Guangyao is having a hard time trying to contain everything."

His companion snorted. "What can that bastard do? His own father wouldn't even give him his name until he gained fame."

Wei Ying calmly sipped his tea as Lan Wangji quietly poked at his meal, thoughts running a mile a minute.

"Did you plan this?" he asked his husband softly.

"Somewhat," Wei Ying admitted. "I originally wanted the women to be gathered by the Nie to present them during the Discussion Conference but Huaisang said that it would be best to hit them while the iron is hot, so to speak."

"Their safety," Lan Wangji reminded. He surmised LanlingJin had suppressed these women with threats to their safety and their families or they would have brought up these allegations already, so it was natural that he would worry about it.

"Don't worry, Huaisang is keeping an eye on the women. The moment they are turned away at Koi Tower or threatened, they return to the safety of the Nie protection," Wei Ying answered. "We just want to publicise what they had done now that no one can deny the perversity of their sect leader."

"Then the Discussion Conference..." Lan Wangji started with a realisation. "You intend to bring all of them there to expose Jin Guangshan at the same time."

"Yes," Wei Ying said. "We will also have some special guests as well."

"Who?" enquired Lan Wangji.

"Among which is Chifeng-zun," Wei Ying answered, handing A-Yuan a bowl of sweet soup. Ah, so nostalgic.

"You are going to summon Chifeng-zun from the dead?" Lan Wangji questioned in surprise.

Wei Ying smiled. "Of course not. I'm no longer Yiling Laozu, remember?"

"No," he continued with a glint in his eyes.

"No, I'm much worse than Yiling Laozu."

*
*

End Chapter 12

Chapter End Notes

* Demon and God. Destruction and Rebirth. Death and Life. Fierce Attacker (Male) or Maternal Defender (Female). All Antithesis of each other. A coin with two sides. Whether WWX was worshipped as YLLZ or FXZS, he would still get merit - Either way, JGY was always destined to fail because ppl were already worshiping WY as both by that point.

(1) The Fùxīng (复兴) in WY's title (复兴祖师) is homophone to 富星 (Fù xīng) Rich Star, meaning Star of Fortune - which is another reason why merchants worship WY.

Edited to add: don't think this is the end of JGS's suffering. He still have 2 months to go before the Conference takes place 😈

Waiting to Happen

Chapter Summary

Jin Guangyao's life continues to be shit. Lan Wangji and Jiang Cheng hate social events but since Wei Wuxian tells them to attend, they do so reluctantly. Meanwhile, Nie Huaisang is entertained with the shit show that is happening while Lan Xichen is in for a long and bumpy ride.

Chapter Notes

HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR!!! 🎉🎉🎉🐯🐯🐯

Sorry for the late update. NGL, this chapter kicked my ass. The amount of conversations interchanging is giving me a whiplash. Also, by my estimation, the whole confrontation scene is gonna take four to five chapters. Pray for me.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Jin Guangyao wished that he was a less controlled person. Then he could actually let go of his inhibitions and go mad on all of Koi Tower, starting from his father. His father, Jin Guangshan, who was now the epitome of shame and embarrassment to the rest of the world.

And yet, the Jin sect still had to go about with a thick skin, flinging money everywhere to help save their sect leader's rapidly crumbling reputation. Jin Guangyao himself had to go on his hands and knees to beg Qin Cangye not to cancel his wedding to his beloved daughter, promising him that things would recover soon.

Though to be honest, Jin Guangyao had no idea how, when his father had sequestered himself in his room, occasionally storming out to scream and run around like a maniac. Recently, he seemed to be ranting about a spider or a fox spirit but no one detected any demonic activities around Koi Tower, despite their best efforts.

Still, Jin Guangyao instructed the cultivators accordingly, sealing off the family quarters with wards designed to keep out demonic beasts.

Of course, the thought that perhaps Fuxing Zushi might have had a hand in it did occur to Jin Guangyao. But despite the Temple Incident having taken place at HIS place of worship, there were no mention of the god made by the witnesses so Jin Guangyao couldn't be sure that Wei Wuxian had any hand in this. Jin Guangyao dearly hoped that it wasn't, because honestly,

there was nothing anyone could actually do to keep an angry god at bay. Cultivation was never designed to counter gods, just demons and spirits.

Would a spirit trap work against a god?

Would a reverse engineered spirit trap work instead? One that uses demonic cultivation?

The thought was well worth examining as they had hardly any other choice. He would need a contingency plan just in case. Especially with his father constantly poking at the sleeping bear.

After his 'episode' at the temple in Langya, Jin Guangshan had taken to swinging like a pendulum, oscillating between manically demanding Jin Guangyao to build his goddess a temple to accusing every woman in the vicinity of being a vixen and a whore.

Jin Guangyao sighed as another throbbing headache pierced through his head.

There was only a few more weeks left to the wedding and then the Discussion Conference. After that, Jin Guangyao can be rid of his father and finally, finally, be able to breath again.

The only upside to all these nonsense was that the Jin elders were now discussing about the line of succession, which had narrowed down to a selected few with Jin Guangyao being at the forefront. With the support of Qin Cangye as his father-in-law, the role of sect leader was almost a certainty for Jin Guangyao, as the only other capable person who could lead the sect as a placeholder for baby Jin Ling was Madam Jin. Who was now in seclusion out of shame from her husband's antics at the temple a month or so ago.

As long as nothing further goes wrong, Jin Guangyao should be able to salvage this situation with his father to a more manageable one.

Just as he thought of this, a servant approached him with a message.

"Young Master Jin," the servants greeted, "Madam Qin of Laoling is requesting to speak to you. She said that it is a matter of utmost urgency."

At that, a shiver went up Jin Guangyao's spine.

Jin Guangyao stood at his father's bed, gripping the dagger so tightly that his hand was white.

Jin Guangshan was sprawled on his bed, smelling of alcohol and sweat. The man hadn't indulged in any woman lately, too fearful and paranoid, but had done his best to drown himself in wine. There were a few times that he called for his son to bring him women but

then turned around and shouted at the few women that dared to answer his call, as if too afraid to come near them.

Jin Guangyao lifted the dagger, its blade glinting from the pale moonlight.

He should just kill this monster. Kill him and free the world of this abomination.

Free Jin Guangyao of the bane of his existence.

He had been so close at getting whatever he wanted. So close...

And now, because of his father's perversity and lack of loyalty, Jin Guangyao had- had bedded his own half sister and impregnated her.

His poor child. His poor, poor child.

He can't let anyone know.

Jin Guangyao must marry Qin Su and bring this secret to his grave. He will arrange for an 'accident' for his ostensible 'mother-in-law' and later, in the future, if his child showed signs of... he will arrange one for his child too. It would be the kinder thing to do. The right thing to do.

"Father, you should get dressed. Your good friend Sect Leader Qin is here to prepare for the wedding," Jin Guangyao said coldly, slipping the dagger back into his robes.

This man, this monster who ruined so many lives, should die slowly and horribly. A single knife to his chest would be too easy for him. His death should be long and memorable.

Jin Guangyao would make sure of it.

Jiang Cheng would be honest.

He'd never seen a less enthusiastic wedding than this one.

Originally, the wedding between Lianfang-zun and Lady Qin Su was supposed to take place after the Discussion Conference. But according to rumours, a fortune teller had informed Jin Guangshan that the only way to 'purge' his recent bad luck and poor health was to have a good celebration (1).

Jin Guangshan was looking emaciated, as if he hadn't eaten and slept well for days. There were dark circles around his eyes and a tenseness about him that denoted paranoia. Even though his hair was still flawless and his clothes were neat, there was something about him that projected a beleaguered air.

He won't lie. Seeing Jin Guangshan looking so pale and hassled made the journey here worthwhile. And the rumours about what Jin Guangshan did in his brother...erm... sister?'s temple made the sight of Jin Guangshan's evident misery all the more satisfying. Especially because he knew that his brother was the cause of it. Wei Wuxian had told him as much, though he had refrained from giving Jiang Cheng any details.

"Just sit and watch," Wei Wuxian had said, patting his shoulder. "Jiang Cheng should be able to enjoy a suitably dramatic show."

Jiang Cheng had rolled his eyes but decided that he would follow his brother's lead. No one can connect any of Jin Guangshan's misfortune to him anyway. And his brother can really stir shit up, especially when he was motivated to do so. Jiang Cheng should know, he'd seen what Wei Wuxian can do, even without a golden core. Coupled with godhood, the fallout would be history worthy.

And Jiang Cheng was petty enough to relish even the anticipation of it. In fact, he was petty enough to halt all production of silk trade towards the LanlingJin for the past year, citing that the previous floods the last two years had affected the mulberry plantation, resulting in poorer cultivation of the silk worms. (Lie, their production had doubled the last year)

As a result, even from where he sat, he could see that the silk robes of the newlywed couple were of lesser quality than the LanlingJin would normally purchase. There was a reason why even Gusu imported their white silk from Yunmeng. Not to mention the Nie sect, who is their biggest trade partner and subsequently, the one who bought out their stock for the last two years.

Though Jiang Cheng had a fleeting thought that perhaps Jin Guangshan just didn't care enough about this unwanted son of his to put much effort in purchasing the best cloth his overflowing coffer could get. Whatever the reason was, it was clear that Jin Guangshan really couldn't be bothered with Jin Guangyao, considering he didn't even bother looking or smiling at the younger man even once since the guests arrived. And even during the ceremony, he barely said anything to Jin Guangyao and only nominally to Qin Su, who was the daughter of his greatest supporter.

It was during the wedding reception that trouble FINALLY started.

During the tedious meal, a bored Jiang Cheng spied an equally deadpanned Lan Wangji sitting behind his brother. It would have been a surprise to see him present if Jiang Cheng didn't already know that he was attending because Wei Wuxian had told him to.

When Jiang Cheng had found out that his brother and Hanguang-jun had tied the knot in secret, he had blown up and it took Jin Zixuan, Wen Qing and A-Jie to stop him from attempting to kill Wei Wuxian (Hey, attempt the impossible, right?). He'd ranted about them not having an official wedding and not inviting him.

"Aw, is Jiang Cheng feeling left out?" Wei Wuxian cooed from behind Hanguang-jun.

"A-Cheng, none of us were invited," A-Jie said, which was her way of ribbing Wei Wuxian who looked genuinely abashed now. "I'm sure A-Xian had a good reason for it, right?"

Jiang Cheng felt mollified when Wei Wuxian winced at that, looking appropriately apologetic for not including his siblings in his wedding, even an impromptu one.

"Lan Wangji! You better come to Lotus Pier with A-Yuan so the two of you can have an official ceremony at the ancestral hall!" Jiang Cheng shouted, pointing at Hanguang-jun. "The three bows must be done in front of A-Jie and my parents! And Wei Wuxian's parents! Even if they are reincarnated, they still deserve your respect!"

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed, nodding as he kept guard in front of Wei Ying in case Jiang Cheng changed his mind and lunge after the god.

At least his new brother-in-law had a good sense to do the right thing, Jiang Cheng thought as he continued to glare at his contrite older brother.

It didn't mean that Jiang Cheng couldn't be a bitch to Hanguang-jun outside of dreams though, just because. If Wei Wuxian complained about it, Jiang Cheng was going to return the favour and complain about their lack of wedding ceremony. A tit for tat.

Back in the present, Lan Wangji looked up from his lackluster meal to meet Jiang Cheng's eyes and nodded.

Jiang Cheng returned the gesture.

Then he looked away to see Nie Huaisang looking at the both of them with his fan covering half his face.

He squinted at his former classmate.

Was that little twerp plotting something?

Just then, a cacophony of voices sounded from the front doors of the hall. A few cultivators ran in from the side door and immediately reported to both Lianfang-zun and Jin Guangshan. The former looked troubled while the latter just looked annoyed and waved his hand dismissively.

"Just kicked them out," Jin Guangshan grumped. But before the cultivators could do much more, the front doors burst open and a mass of people, commoners, judging from their clothes and demeanor, rushed in.

"What is this!?" bellowed Jin Guangshan, getting up from his chair.

"Justice! We demand justice!" they called out, punching the air with their fists.

"We demand justice!" a man shouted. "That man violated my sister and she killed herself out of shame!"

"My daughter! My daughter was killed by that man!" a woman accused, sobbing horrendously. "He killed my daughter!"

"Jin cultivators came to my house and killed my son! All because he made a formal complaint about them!"

"He violated my daughter and paid her pennies to shut her mouth!"

"Our poor children!"

"No parent should bury their children! You ruined so many lives because of your perversity, your own son had to carry the burden of your sins!"

"WHO SAID THAT!??" Jin Guangshan raged. "I'LL KILL YOU!!!"

"Father, no!" Jin Guangyao ran forward to stop his father but the larger man threw him aside. Jin Guangyao fell and hit his head on a pillar, the collision loud enough to be heard through the hall. Seeing that, Qin Su screamed and Lan Xichen rushed forward to help his youngest sworn brother.

"Drag all these people out and flog them!" Jin Guangshan ordered his men. "They came to ruin my celebration and tarnish my name! What proof do you have, huh!? You have no proof! These are all just accusations!"

At that point, Lan Wangji, who had been quiet and unobtrusive all night, spoke up.

"Even the Chief Cultivator must be held responsible for his actions," Lan Wangji insisted. "Or do you propose that we ignore the atrocities done onto innocent people?"

"Perhaps, Sect Leader Jin thinks that being Chief Cultivator excuses him from punishment. Just like Wen Ruohan, when he started decimating the minor sects and subjugating the commoners," Jiang Cheng contributed. Wei Wuxian wasn't the only shit-stirrer in the family after all and Jiang Cheng was plenty motivated.

The other sect leaders looked at each other, reminded of how Wei Wuxian had once warned them that Jin Guangshan was headed towards the same direction of the previous Chief Cultivator, with the conspicuous flaunt of his power and blatant greed.

For his part, Jin Guangshan's face turned even redder as he gaped wordlessly at their combined stand while the commoners continued to cry out for justice.

"A Chief Cultivator who victimizes the people!"

"Jin Guangshan takes advantages of daughters and sisters! They will do the same to yours!"

"A pervert who defiles a goddess' temple!"

"That's enough! How can you say that about Chief Cultivator Jin!?" shouted Sect Leader Qin, who looked aghast at how his daughter's happy day had been ruined.

"Surely these protesters are just here to cause trouble," said a leader of a small sect whom Jiang Cheng only vaguely recognised. Whomever it is, he was a blatant rip-off of Hanguang-jun, with the white robes and the pretentious qin.

"Anyone who believe that an abuse of power is the prerogative of the Chief Cultivator must be in the same league," Jiang Cheng interjected, which shut many people up at the same time. No one wanted to be lumped with a well known pervert.

Then Jiang Cheng turned to the crowd, projecting a 'Don't fucking mess with me' vibe, that usually don't work on his brother but worked well enough for everyone else that all the protesters actually quieted down.

"Today is a day of celebration," he said calmly. "Tomorrow, you will have your chance to voice your complaints before the start of the Discussion Conference. Hanguang-jun and I will personally attend to each and everyone of you."

Normally, Jiang Cheng wouldn't bother with volunteering his time to sort out this sort of shit, especially when it was the sort of shit caused by Jin Guangshan, but he had a feeling that his brother would appreciate his participation in bringing down their ostensible leader. Plus, this way, he gets to have front row seat to the shit show that was Jin Guangshan's prospective future. He's pretty sure his brother-in-law would appreciate his nomination too.

His words seemed to mollify the crowd as they turned to each other and discussed their next move with one another. The reputation of Hanguang-jun and Sandu-shengshou as a force of nature during the Sunshot Campaign was undeniable. With two unbiased, righteous cultivators fighting for their rights, surely, they would get their justice.

"And if Zewu-jun is amendable," Nie Huaisang interjected quite timidly. "He can sit in too."

"Three is better than two," he continued, his voice rising into a squeak when Jiang Cheng frowned at him.

Lan Xichen, still looking over his injured sworn brother, turned to them just as the Jin physicians came to retrieve Lianfang-zun.

"Xiongzhong," Lan Wangji said and Lan Xichen seemed to understand as he nodded his agreement, even though he was still shooting looks of concern at Jin Guangyao's injured form. Qin Su was fretting over her new husband as the healers loaded him on a stretcher despite his protests.

"Wait, I can help resolve this-!" Jin Guangyao was interrupted by his wife insistent crying.

"A-Yao, you must go and get your injuries seen to," she pled. "You are bleeding so much!"

"I will handle this A-Yao," said Lan Xichen, patting his shoulder before Jin Guangyao was carried away. Then he turned to the collective crowd and the cultivators.

"We will listen to your grievances and spare no effort in ensuring that proper justice will be delivered," Lan Xichen promised calmly, assuring the crowd of commoners.

"What!? You can't do that! I am the Chief Cultivator! Not any of you- you youngsters!" shouted Jin Guangshan, looking quite deranged in Jiang Cheng's opinion. He hoped that all

the other Sect Leaders thought so too because what he was about to say next was going to be the killing blow to Jin Guangshan's short lived career as Chief Cultivator.

"Yes, and such a model example you are as a Chief Cultivator," he said snidely. "Victimising the people you are supposed to protect. Committing adultery openly and repeatedly. Dishonoring your wife and marriage. Mistreating your own children. Coveting other's possessions. Protecting the well-known demonic cultivator that decimated the Chang clan. Defiling a temple."

He pointed to Jin Guangshan and turned to the other cultivators. "Is THIS the man you want to be your leader? To be above you? In time, he will do the same thing to all of us what he did to his own people and his sons."

Then, he finished with, "He will target your wives, your sisters and your daughters. He's already shown that he doesn't even fear the divine goddess. Why would he fear us mortals!?"

Jiang Cheng accidentally met eyes with Nie Huaisang, who gave him an impressed look and a discreet thumbs up from behind his fan. Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes and was about to rally the other sect leaders to force Jin Guangshan to abdicate when Lan Wangji spoke up.

"I agree with Sect Leader Jiang," he said, still looking unperturbed and untouched by everything that had happened. "I petition the removal of Jin Guangshan from the post of Chief Cultivator."

"I second that," Jiang Cheng said quickly and then, to his surprise, Nie Huaisang lifted his hand and chimed out, "I third that!"

Lan Xichen still looked a little shocked by the events that had unfolded but he quickly caught on and added his two cents, "I agree with the notion as well."

Jin Guangshan's face was redder than a baboon's butt by now and he promptly decided to show everyone that their judgement was correct by throwing a massive tantrum. He flipped his table into the centre of the hallway where the commoners were still standing, screaming at the top of his lungs. Jiang Cheng jumped forward with Zidian and snapped his whip forward to break the heavy table and felt more than saw Lan Wangji doing the same thing beside him with Bichen. The pieces of the table, pottery and food fell away to the sides of them, never even touching the gathered crowd.

"Jin Guangshan!" Lan Xichen shouted in outrage. "You-"

"All of you! All of you are trying to overthrow me!" Jin Guangshan ranted loudly. "You are all her minions! That whore!"

"He's clearly unhinged," Jiang Cheng whispered to Lan Wangji, "We should just knock him out before he causes more damage."

Lan Wangji nodded and Jiang Cheng had the satisfaction of summoning Zidian to smack Jin Guangshan in the chest when he suddenly pulled out his ostentatious sword. Lan Wangji pulled out a talisman that he flicked towards the crazed cultivator and it attached to the raving

lunatic's chest, pinning him down. (Jiang Cheng had the vague suspicion as to who designed that talisman, but he was definitely not about to say anything about that.)

"You can't do this to me! I am Chief Cultivator! I am the Jin Sect Lea- uhmmmpfh," Jin Guangshan's mouth clamped shut suddenly and Jiang Cheng gave Lan Wangji a grateful nod.

"Welllll, this was certainly exciting reception dinner entertainment," Nie Huaisang mumbled to himself, coincidentally in Jiang Cheng's and Lan Wangji's hearing range. Jiang Cheng had to rub a hand on his nose to cover the smirk on his face.

"I think," he said out loud. "We should make it fair. We have representative from GusuLan and YunmengJiang. Unfortunately, Lianfang-zun is not in the condition to sit in tomorrow morning for the petition, so Sect Leader Nie should take part in it instead."

He turned to grin toothily at an upset looking Nie Huaisang (was the little twerp sulking?).

"You'd do it, right?" he questioned it like Nie Huaisang was given no choice to the matter unless he wanted to taste Zidian on his back.

Nie Huaisang gave him a weak smile.

"It would be my (dubious) honor," he squeaked finally.

Originally, the Discussion Conference was scheduled two days after the wedding, accounting for hangovers and rest after a celebration.

However, since the reception was interrupted before anyone could truly get drunk (and after, no one wanted to since there was so much gossip to be had), the petition commenced very early the next morning.

Families, women, husbands and even cultivators made their way into the interview room one by one. It took more than three days to finish listening to all the atrocities done to them and the Discussion Conference had to be postponed so that an inventory of the crimes of Jin Guangshan could be made.

By the time the three Sect Leaders and Hanguang-jun finally finished their session, Jiang Cheng's mood was blacker than soot. Given what his brother had hinted at, he had a suspicion that they were just skimming the top of truly deep lake of accumulated sins that Jin Guangshan had committed. How anyone can do so much atrocious acts within one lifetime was beyond him.

"Tomorrow, the Discussion Conference will commence and we will present our findings," Lan Xichen said tiredly, looking extremely solemn and unlike himself.

"Hear, hear," Jiang Cheng mumbled, rubbing his hands on his face. He needed a bath, he had never felt so dirty in his life and he had fought in a war without bathing for a week before. "I can't wait for this shit to end."

Nie Huaisang made a sound that was a mix between agreeing and whimpering, his head pillowed on his arms.

"Everyone should go rest and reconvene tomorrow morning," Lan Xichen agreed, standing up from his seat with the others following his cue.

To Lan Xichen's surprise, his youngest sworn brother was waiting for him outside. His head had been bandaged and he was missing his hat. He looked much better now, after a few days of rest from the severe concussion that his father had given him, but he was still uncharacteristically disheveled. Normally, a cultivator would have healed quickly from such an injury but Jin Guangyao's cultivation was not strong enough to perform such a feat.

Not everyone is like Lan Wangji after all.

Jin Guangyao surprised them when he knelt on the floor and immediately burst into tears.

"Er-ge! I didn't know! I didn't know that my father did all those thing! Please believe me! I would never have condoned to it!" he claimed.

"A-Yao!" Lan Xichen exclaimed, alarmed. "You must get up! You just recovered. You will aggravate your condition."

"What is he? Pregnant?" Jiang Cheng mumbled to himself, completely unmoved by the display because 1) he was sick of the Jins being fuck ups, 2) he was tired as fuck and 3) he hated waterworks, can't stand them, especially when people who used them to manipulate others.

Then Jiang Cheng caught a glimpse of the expression on Nie Huaisang's face and was startled by the hatred in those eyes and the curl of his lips that looked like a snarl. He nudged him surreptitiously and Nie Huaisang's expression abruptly changed.

"Please, er-ge. He is my father. Please have mercy on him," Jin Guangyao begged, looking quite pathetic with his injury, general unkemptness and tears.

"He will have as much mercy as he had shown others," Lan Wangji answered, his voice cold and unforgiving. Jiang Cheng wanted to agree out loud but he was rather busy pulling Nie Huaisang away without being detected.

He's going to let Lan Wangji duke out that front with his brother.

In the meantime, he was going to have a little chat with his old classmate.

Jiang Cheng started out the day being quite certain that the Discussion Conference would end with Jin Guangshan in a jail cell with an execution date hanging over him.

But as usual, things goes to shit.

When he arrived at the hall early the next morning, there was already an alarming topic of conversation going about that went out of hand before they even brought up the list of crimes their ostensible Chief Cultivator had committed.

"The Burial Mounds have changed! It has turned into a green forest!" exclaimed Sect Leader Yao, looking worried and disconcerted. "My disciples were passing through when they saw it but was unable to enter it when they wanted to investigate. They came immediately to report to me last night."

"It's the doing of Fuxing Zushi, the locals claimed," he continued.

"The Venerable Patriarch of Renewal?" repeated Sect Leader Auyong. "My wife prays to him. My son was sick a few months ago and he miraculously became well in one night after my wife prayed to him. She's been making weekly offerings because of it."

"No! No! But hear this," Sect Leader Yao continued, looking alarmed. "The locals in Yiling said that Fuxing Zushi is the reincarnation of Yiling Laozu!"

There was a collective gasp of shock from the people that were obviously not in the know and Jiang Cheng had a sinking feeling that things may not go as smoothly as he had hoped. He wasn't naïve enough to think that his brother's spreading influence can be kept a secret from the cultivators for long but he had hoped that it wouldn't be at a time like this.

"Yiling Laozu is back!?"

"Reincarnated!? As a god? Preposterous!"

"It cannot be! Yiling Laozu is a demon! How can he be reincarnated as a god?"

"Fuxing Zushi? Isn't there a temple in Langya for Fuxing Mushi? Are they the same?"

"FUXING MUSHI!"

There was a bang and Jin Guangshan emerged from the doorway, looking crazed with his hair in a disarray and his clothes disheveled. He was even missing one shoe and his overcoat and belt. He looked completely unlike the pompous Chief Cultivator that he once was.

"It must be him! It must be him that cursed me!" exclaimed Jin Guangshan, red-veined eyes wide with paranoia. "He must have done this to me! That whore! She's everywhere!"

Jiang Cheng exchange looks with Nie Huaisang, who looked grim behind his fan. The other Sect Leader gave him a nod of acknowledgement and Jiang Cheng refrained from saying anything to defend his brother from the clearly crazed Chief Cultivator.

Everyone could see that the man was unhinged and Jiang Cheng wouldn't need to rile him up to make him dig his own grave deeper.

"Who let him out?" Jiang Cheng questioned aloud instead. Jin Guangshan had been imprisoned in his own jail down in the basement of Koi Tower while they discussed his crimes. For him to be out here meant that someone loyal to him must have released him and the idiot decided that fighting for his position was more important than running for his life.

"SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP! STOP TALKING TO ME! STOP LAUGHING AT ME!" Jin Guangshan screamed, looking up at the rafters and everywhere but the cultivators gathered.

Jiang Cheng frowned and looked up as well, as did the others present but there was no one there.

"STOP HAUNTING ME! IT'S ALL HIS FAULT! ALL WEI WUXIAN'S FAULT!"

"That's enough. You are not making any sense," Jiang Cheng shouted, incensed. "Wei Wuxian is dead!"

No thanks to you, Jiang Cheng silently added in his mind.

"NO NO NO! He is haunting me! You don't see him! All of you! Don't see him! He haunts me everywhere!" the crazed former Chief Cultivator insisted. "I'll show all of you! I'll drag him out from the Burial Mounds!"

Before anyone can stop him, Jin Guangshan ran out of the hall, screaming wordlessly.

"I hope no one gives him a sword," Jiang Cheng said aloud, frown thunderous.

And just as he said that, a Jin cultivator ran in shouting that the Sect Leader had confiscated his sword and flew off.

Jiang Cheng wanted to facepalm. Meanwhile, Jin Guangyao looked faint as he held onto Lan Xichen's sleeve while older man just looked entirely too confused by what had just happened.

"Wangji?" Lan Xichen turned to his brother, looking at him in askance, but Lan Wangji's expression must not have conveyed anything of importance because Lan Xichen's frown deepened.

"Er-ge, er-ge. My father," Jin Guangyao pleaded softly and Lan Xichen turned back to the distressed man to comfort him.

Jiang Cheng wanted to snort but instead announced to the general public gathered, "We should all go!"

Then all of you can see what a complete nut job Jin Guangshan is, Jiang Cheng thought. And maybe, just maybe, if he was sneaky enough, he could push that asshole down the side of the cliff.

"YES!" Sect Leader Yao said, rallying the other sects. "If Wei Wuxian has returned, we must eradicate the demon! It is our duty to protect the civilians! Prevent them from worshipping a false god!"

This, he had to see, Jiang Cheng decided vindictively. If they wanted to piss off the ex-Yiling Laozu-now-turned-god-of-the-underworld, he had to witness it.

Ah, he remembered he had a pouch full of roasted lotus seeds. Great. He's sure that Lan Wangji and Nie Huaisang would appreciate some while they watch the dumpster fire that was about to happen.

He waited until everyone clambered out of the hall, Discussion Conference completely forgotten and Lan Xichen's call for order ignored. Finally, even the virtuous Zewu-jun gave up trying to regulate the chaos and headed out to join the (one-sided) foray with Lianfang-zun fretting behind him. Nie Huaisang, the slacker that he was, managed to grab a ride with his exasperate second-in-charge.

"What a shitshow," Jiang Cheng grumbled as he walked towards the exit.

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed, walking beside him. In front of them, his older brother shot them both a look of confusion from over his shoulder at the unspoken camaraderie between them.

Lan Xichen didn't know that they spent time in their dreams on occasions with Wei Wuxian and his nephew(s), and Jiang Cheng was not about to inform him of that. If Lan Wangji did not inform him of it, well, it was their business and the Lan brothers' relationship issue was none of his concern.

"I'm surprised you even came," Jiang Cheng commented to his brother-in-law. "Thought this kind of thing wasn't your scene."

"It is not," Lan Wangji confirmed. "But I was asked to attend and watch."

Jiang Cheng nodded, then said. "When are you and A-Yuan coming to Lotus Pier? Summer is ending soon."

"In two weeks. I am arranging with his tutors to clear his time table. I will inform you of our date of arrival," Lan Wangji said in a sentence longer than he had ever spoken to Jiang Cheng before.

"Sure. Just tell me a few days in advance so I can have HIS bedroom cleaned for you and A-Yuan," Jiang Cheng said as he stood on his sword to fly towards the Burial Mounds. Lan Wangji did the same, leaving his brother wondering when the two of them had gotten so well acquainted.

How did Jiang Wanyin know about A-Yuan?

*

*

End Chapter 13

Chapter End Notes

(1) 冲洗 (Chongxi) - is to have a flush of good fortune to ward away the bad luck. Like hell this would work for JGS but nice try. lol.

Blossom Mountain

Chapter Summary

They cultivators arrived to what used to be the Burial Mounds, now over run by flora, and Lan Xichens gets several slaps across the face with the mackerel of truth.

Chapter Notes

Ugh, moving is postponed and I'm swamped with problems. Not work. But problems. Posting this chapter to get my mind off things.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

They arrived to what used to be the Burial Mounds, now over run by flora, and Jin Guangshan fruitlessly swinging his stolen sword at the plants while screaming at the top of his lungs.

Surprisingly, there were no barriers keeping them out of the area like the Yao cultivators had reported. Instead, what greeted them was fresh air filled with the scent of flowers, bees floating around collecting pollen, birds chirping as crickets hummed. All in all, it was a very peaceful place now, unlike what it used to be.

"Wei Wuxian! Come out! My goddess! I will kill him for you!"

Well, peaceful except for that.

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes and gestured to his disciples to disarm and apprehend the clearly raving lunatic. It was obvious that no one cared for the man either since no one protested when the Jiang disciples caught the struggling Jin Sect Leader and pinned him down on the ground.

Instead, they were all fascinated by the changes that had been brought onto the place that was once known as a death sentence for anyone that fell into it.

"Welcome to Blossom Mountain," a voice said.

They turned towards the mouth of the cave that was once Wei Wuxian's lair, now christened to the Temple of Blossom Mountain, judging by the nameboard above the entrance.

Xiao Xingchen stood at the entrance, his white clothes gleaming brightly in the afternoon sun. His eyes was bandaged but he did not seemed hindered by his blindness as he regarded all of them coolly.

"Blossom Mountain?" Su Minshan questioned. "This is the Burial Mounds!"

"It used to be, yes," Xiao Xingchen confirmed. "But now it has been christened to Blossom Mountain after receiving the blessing of Fuxing Zushi."

"Fuxing Zushi!? That imposter god!?"

Xiao Xingchen tilted his head in question, "Imposter god?"

"Daozhang, did you not know?" Jin Guangyao asked kindly. "Fuxing Zushi is said to be the reincarnation of Yiling Laozu Wei Wuxian."

Xiao Xingchen turned his head to face directly at Jin Guangyao, "I do know that my shizhi is Fuxing Zushi. It is all of you who are uninformed."

He turned to the crowd of cultivators, "Wei Wuxian is not an imposter god. He ascended upon his death and became the God of Renewal."

"What? Preposterous!" exclaimed Sect Leader Yao.

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes and stepped up the stairs, ignoring the other sect leaders. He could hear Lan Wangji following his lead.

"You can shout your skepticisms all you want to the heavens but if you won't go in, then you are free to get lost," Jiang Cheng said to the other sect leaders. He made sure to signal to his disciples to drag Jin Guangshan into the cave. The asshole should be a part of this confrontation as well.

They all filed in one by one, some slower than others, as if thinking that they might be ambushed (by what? the bushes?)

The walls of the cave was also filled to the brim with flowers and foliage. Jiang Cheng idly wondered why his brother was associated with so much greenery. Like really? No wonder people started worshipping him as a woman.

There was an incense burner, an ash pot with three incense sticks, some potted flowers and a few fruit offerings set on an altar that used to be Wei Wuxian's stone bed. Up on the wall was a small painting of Wei Wuxian in his customary black and red, standing on a red lotus. Above him was a moon surrounded by 13 stars.

Lan Xichen stared at the portrait, trying to process everything that had been happening for the last few days. Wei Wuxian was Fuxing Zushi and also Fuxing Mushi. A-Yuan's mother. Wangji's... Wangji's what?

When the last of the stragglers entered the cave, Xiao Xingchen entered as well, standing at the doorway like he was guarding it.

"Where is he?" asked Sect Leader Yao. "Is he hiding?"

"Why should he?" Xiao Xingchen asked. "There is nothing he fears here."

Then, the bright moon and gentle breeze smiled, cold and formidable.

"It is only those who have sinned that should be afraid," he said, a promise in his voice.

"Who are you referring to!?" Su She demanded. "Are you implying that we are the sinners!? Wei Wuxian is the one who killed 3000 cultivators and the demonic cultivator! We have nothing to be ashamed of! Not like that Wei dog!"

With that, he swung his sword at the altar, breaking the flower pots and the incense burner as well as spilling fruits and ash everywhere. Jiang Cheng had to hold himself back from punching the asshole but Lan Wangji immediately unsheathed his sword and held the unruly Sect Leader by blade point.

"Lan Wangji!" Su She shouted, but despite his disrespectful behaviour, Xiao Xingchen did not react to his violence beyond tightening his grip on the hilt of his sword.

"Really? None of you have anything to hide?" Xiao Xingchen said, turning slowly to once again accurately face Jin Guangyao, whose heart started racing.

Jin Guangyao swallowed and he turned to Lan Xichen.

"Er-ge, there is nothing here. We should return to Koi Tower with my father to commence the Discussion Conference," Jin Guangyao said desperately. "This is clearly just an empty false temple."

From the moment he arrived, Jin Guangyao had a feeling that he had made a monumental mistake diverting everyone here. He thought that with the barrier around the Burial Mounds, everyone would be more preoccupied with breaking the wards to storm the area than pay attention to his father's disappearance. Unfortunately, he did not account to his father being insane enough to storm the Discussion Conference, instead of running away like he was supposed to after being let out of the prison.

If Jin Guangshan had just escaped, then Jin Guangyao could have arranged for a manhunt and pin everything on his ostensible father in his absence. And then, Jin Guangshan would be 'found' and some overenthusiastic guard would 'accidentally' kill his father. That way, his 'father' would not have the chance to defend himself or to shift the blame to Jin Guangyao, like he was prone to.

Instead, they were here now in what felt like a trap set for him.

And he would be right because it was at that moment someone stepped out from the shadows, dressed in dark colours of green and grey, with his saber strapped to his back.

"Nothing to hide, and yet, you are attempting to run away," Nie Mingjue said, a thunderstorm brewing on his face and voice.

The cultivators all balked at seeing a supposed dead man walking. All of them took steps back, all except Jiang Wanyin, Lan Wangji, Nie Huaisang and Lan Xichen, who was too stunned by the sudden appearance of his childhood friend.

"YOU- You're dead!" Jin Guangshan screamed while Jin Guangyao's face turned paler than a sheet of paper. The Jin Sect Leader struggled against his bonds screaming, "You're dead! DEAD!"

"Yes, you would like that, won't you? All those who oppose the Jin Sects declared dead to pave the way for your ambitions," Nie Mingjue said, face calm and cold despite the fury evident in his eyes. "Wen Ruohan, Wèi Wuxian, me, even Song Lan and Xiao Xingchen have spoken against you. And just so conveniently, all of us are met with 'accidents'."

"Lies! We had nothing to do with WEN Ruohan's downfall!" Jin Guangshan denied, shaking his head and making himself look even more like a lunatic. "Nothing! Not our fault!"

"But you had with the others?" Xiao Xingchen interjected.

Jin Guangshan spluttered and before he could come up with more laughable excuses, Nie Mingjue continued.

"We? And who is 'we'?" the large man asked pointedly.

Predictably, this seemed to give Jin Guangshan the inspiration to blame everything on his son. Turning his body to implicate his illegitimate son, he screamed, "It was him. Everything is his fault. He was the one who set Wei Wuxian up! Not me! You! It's all your fault. You did this!"

Jin Guangyao shook his head, scrunching his shoulders to make himself look smaller, looking like a real scapegoat for his father's incessant blame game.

"I don't know what he is saying!" Jin Guangyao denied. "Er-ge, you must believe me! I didn't do anything he said I did!"

But Lan Xichen himself was still looking at Nie Mingjue like he was seeing a ghost. In fact, he was so pale that he looked almost like a ghost himself. Lan Wangji had to stand beside his brother to put a hand on the Sect Leader's elbow to steady him.

"Are you saying you did not know what was going on under your nose? The renown seneschal of Jin Guangshan. You, who is intelligent and capable, considered the new hope of

the sect, not knowing what was happening right under your nose?" Jiang Cheng snarked, thoroughly enjoying himself inwardly.

After his little talk with Nie Huaisang, who'd filled him in on what had happened with his Da-ge, Jiang Cheng had looked forward to seeing the repercussion of Jin Guangyao's schemes slapping him in the face.

Of course, he was annoyed with Wei Wuxian for not telling him what had happened between Nie Mingjue and Jin Guangyao but Jiang Cheng had a suspicion it was because he would have shown his card pretty early on. Everyone knew that Jiang Cheng couldn't keep his emotions in check.

And he had a suspicion that Jin Guangyao was involved in a lot more than just Nie Mingjue's attempted murder. If that rat dared to betray to his own sworn brother, who had time and again given him chances to prove himself, what more to others.

"Are you-are you a sentient fierce corpse!?" Sect Leader Su stammered, looking just as pale Jin Guangshan and Jin Guangyao were.

Nie Mingjue rolled his eyes and pulled down the collar of his robes, revealing a muscular neck clear of any black veins. "I'm still alive, moron. What kind of cultivator are you that you can't tell the difference between a fierce corpse and a living person?"

Sect Leader Su spluttered, face now gaining back colour as he flushed with embarrassment for being reprimanded by Chifeng-zun.

For his part, Nie Mingjue ignored the youngster in favor of confronting Jin Guangyao.

"Give it up, Meng Yao," Nie Mingjue said, looking completely calm despite the fact that he was facing the man who tortured and attempted to kill him. "Might as well confess to everything and leave with your chest clear of sin."

That seemed to jar Lan Xichen from his stupor as he turned to Jin Guangyao as well, "A-Yao..? What does Da-ge mean?"

"Jin Guangyao, under the orders of his father, Jin Guangshan, orchestrated my qi deviation with the skill that you taught him," Nie Mingjue answered instead, not pulling his punch at all. "Under the guise of helping me, he played a modified score of Clarity that induces qi deviation if played long term."

"How- how..?" Lan Xichen asked as he turned to look in disbelief at Jin Guangyao, who shook his head in denial.

"No- no. Er-ge-I didn't-"

"It's true," Lan Wangji confirmed. "I checked the library pavilion after I came out of seclusion and there were two pages missing in the Book of Turmoil."

"That cannot be," Lan Xichen denied weakly. "The Book of Turmoil is in the forbidden section of the library. How could A-Yao ever find that book?"

"San-ge was the spy that infiltrated Nightless City and became Wen Ruohan's most trusted personnel," Nie Huaisang answered, looking quite unlike the spineless coward that he usually played. Instead, he was glaring at Jin Guangyao from above his fan. "Infiltrating Gusulan would be easy for someone like him. Someone unobtrusive and unassuming. Whom no one will look twice at."

"A-Sang, you-" Jin Guangyao had no right to look so betrayed considering what he had done to the brother of Nie Huaisang.

"That is what you taught me, San-ge," Nie Huaisang, sounding as if he was nailing Jin Guangyao's coffin shut one nail at a time.

"Did- did you all know..?" Lan Xichen questioned, looking at Nie Huaisang, then to Nie Mingjue and Lan Wangji. "How did you find out all these things?"

"Who else," Jiang Cheng said with an unexpressive face.

"Wei- Wei Wuxian? And you believe him?" Lan Xichen asked incredulously.

Jiang Cheng's face became stormier. "Of course, I believe him. He's my brother. And this is why your own brother didn't tell you. Because you'd rather believe that rat than Lan Wangji himself."

Lan Xichen reeled back, hurt clear on his face. He turned to his taciturn brother as if to get confirmation of such a statement and received no indication that Lan Wangji believed otherwise.

"I don't need to believe him," Nie Mingjue said in turn, "I lived through it. I saw this rat ordering Xue Yang to put nails on my head so that they can turn me into a fierce corpse."

This set off a flurry of whispers throughout the attendees, which had been quietly watching so far. The words 'demonic cultivator' and 'turning people into fierce corpses' as well as 'Wen Ruohan' circled the enclosed cave.

Lan Xichen actually took a step back, pulling away from Jin Guangyao, a look of utter shock on his face.

"Da-ge, you had a qi deviation," Jin Guangyao said weakly, still looking wronged, "Surely, that is just a figment of your imagination. You've always mistrusted me. I wouldn't be surprised if Wei Wuxian used that to 'suggest' that it was I who you saw while you were hallucinating."

"Wow, you're really trying hard to blame it all on me, aren't you?"

Almost all of the cultivators present jumped at the voice, looking around the cave as the light from the torches flickered and the shadows grew.

"I applaud your efforts, Jin Guangyao," the voice continued. "But the more you try, the deeper you dig your grave."

"Who! Who is that!? Show yourself, coward!" Sect Leader Su shouted, unsheathing his sword.

"Just because you command so? Not likely," Wei Wuxian's voice replied. "But I will show myself, just because I know how much you people like to curse me to my face."

"Even if it is to your own detriment."

With that said, Wei Wuxian's form melted from the flickering shadows.

Unlike the other times that Jiang Cheng and the others had seen him, this time, his silk robes were heavy and long, train and sleeves trailing on the ground behind him. The hems were embroidered heavily with crimson red thread that glittered like precious stones and the silver moon on the back of his over robes transitioned through the phases of the moon as he moved and the light reflecting on it changed. The thick brocade belt around his slim waist was blood red and secured by a long rose red sash with trailing ends looped around his elbows.

His hair, normally in a messy half up do, was combed meticulously with none of his bangs falling into his face. But instead of a hair crown, he had dead branches growing from a silver skull of a raven. It would have been a macabre headpiece if it wasn't for the green and pink buds of plum blossoms growing from the tip of the withered branches.

He really did look like a god brought to life straight from a painting.

And it was clear that he came not as Yiling Laozu, but as his new incarnation.

Fuxing Zushi, Wei Wuxian, had arrived.

He stood tall and proud, like he once did at Nightless City, facing all 3000 cultivators on his own.

Seeing him now, Lan Xichen could see the resemblance that Wei Wuxian had to the painting of the Goddess of Renewal. Could it be? Could it really be that Lan Yuan was actually his child!? But A-Yuan shared more physical features with Wangji than he did with Wei Wuxian, except of course the intelligent grey eyes.

"Wei Wuxian! You dare show your face!?" shouted Su Minshan, clearly trying to show bravado considering he was as pale as a piece of parchment.

Wei Wuxian made a show of slowly blinking at him before asking, "Who even are you?"

Su Minshan's colour returned rapidly, turning the man almost puce. Wei Wuxian's attention on him evaporated as quickly as it came, as he turned away to address the room in general.

"This is certainly nostalgic," he drawled, gesturing to all of them. "And here I thought I was done with all of you after I died and woke up in Youming."

Jiang Cheng snorted, taking a seat on what used to be Wei Wuxian's stone table, now soft with moss. To all the cultivators' surprise, he took out a pouch filled with roasted lotus seeds and started munching on them.

"Are you going to share those? You are sharing those, right?" Wei Wuxian asked, eyeing the lotus seeds.

"Get your own," Jiang Cheng snarked back, pulling away his snack.

"Mean! The lotus seeds in Diyu tastes weird," Wei Wuxian said with a pout. "And you never burn any for me and Shijie."

Jiang Cheng looked guilty at that. He wordlessly tied the pouch again and passed the whole thing to a cheerfully smug Wei Wuxian.

"Make sure you share it with A-Jie!" Jiang Wanyin said firmly.

"Yes, yes," Wei Wuxian agreed, pouring some in his hands to throw into his mouth.

"Sect Leader Jiang! What are you doing!?"

Jiang Cheng gave the sect leader a glare for daring to ask such a stupid question.

"Giving my brother lotus seeds," he answered snappishly. "Obviously."

"Are you condoning to this-this atrocity!? Wei Wuxian is masquerading as a false god!" exclaimed Sect Leader Yao.

Jiang Cheng rolled his eyes and answered, "Are you an idiot? Wei Wuxian doesn't need anyone's approval. He ascended before he was even known as a god. That means he doesn't need worshippers to maintain his powers. Even if you take down all his temples, he will still be a god."

"Oh, he's not wrong," Wei Wuxian confirmed, chewing nonchalantly. "Apparently, my designation was made mandatory to hail in the new era after Dianxia took over as Emperor of Heaven. Originally, there wasn't even supposed to be a Fuxing Zushi. My designation was actually something else."

"You're not? Then what were you supposed to be?" Jiang Wanyin questioned. It was hard for him to think of what else his brother was supposed to be. The post as a chthonic god seemed to suit him to the T.

Wei Wuxian pointed to Lan Wangji and said, "The Yin to his Yang. I'm supposed to be his counterpart for a pair of Martial Gods in charge of Central Heavens."

"Then, what happened?" Lan Xichen asked, trying to wrap his mind around everything that was happening. Wangji, ascending as a god?

"Well, a civil war in the heavens happened. And when that happens, it's reflected down on the mortal world in the form of a great war," Wei Wuxian said, tucking the pouch of lotus seed into his sleeves for later. "Which we all know as the Sunshot Campaign (1)."

"And because of that, I died before I was supposed to ascend with Lan Zhan later on in life. Thrice," he emphasised with three fingers up. "Third time's the charm, I suppose."

"I didn't- Wait, you died!?" Jiang Cheng interrupted, horror on his face. Oops. Lan Zhan didn't look too happy either. "How!?"

"Well..." Wei Wuxian hesitated.

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji said firmly and Wei Wuxian relented immediately.

"The Xuanwu cave," Wei Wuxian answered. "The Burial Mounds after Wen Chao threw me in there. And then, you know."

He gestured in the general direction of the other cultivators who were still gaping speechlessly at him.

Jiang Cheng face was the one that was white now. He'd clearly remember what Wei Wuxian had told him about being in the Burial Mounds the first time without his golden core.

"You- All this time," his brother breathed, looking like he was about to hurl.

"Oh, don't worry about it," Wei Wuxian assured. "Apparently, each time I died, I ascended. The first two times, I was so out of it, I fought against the Heavenly Guards and threw myself down back into my body. Don't ask me how. I don't even remember."

At this Jiang Cheng gave him an incredulous look while Lan Zhan just continued looking devastated for not noticing that his love had died in his arms back in the Xuanwu cave despite his best efforts. Wei Wuxian didn't blame him for it. Lan Zhan was severely hurt himself and was fatigued too.

"Only you," muttered Jiang Cheng, looking done as he buried his face in his hands. Wei Wuxian gave him a sheepish laugh.

"Ascending... three times," Lan Xichen repeated. Ascending once was already hard enough, but three?

It meant that all this time, Wei Wuxian was fated to become a god. With Wangji.

They were supposed to be together as a pair of martial gods. Yin and Yang. Black and white. A balanced pair.

And all this time, he had been against his brother being with his fated pair.

No, in the beginning he had been supportive of it. From the time Wei Wuxian had come to Cloud Recesses and even when he had started practicing demonic cultivation. He'd supported his brother in pursuing his heart's desire.

Even when Wangji wanted to bring Wei Wuxian back to Gusu and hide him like their father once hid their mother.

But...what changed?

A little earworm echoed in his mind; *his reputation*.

Lan Xichen's belief in him had been swayed by the rumours that circulated after the war, about the Yiling Laozu doing heinous acts and performing terrible rituals that involved the slaughtering of infants and women.

But only after the war; that little earworm continued.

During the war, Wei Wuxian was hailed as a saviour and immediately after, a hero. And even if no one wanted to fully credit the demonic cultivator for being their most pivotal fighter that turned the war to their favour, Lan Xichen knew that without Wei Wuxian, they would all be dead.

During the war, Wei Wuxian had shown himself to be volatile and short tempered but he hadn't actively tried to hurt anyone, except for Jin Zixuan but that was in defense of his sister, according to Wangji.

And when Lan Xichen thought about it, the Wei Wuxian that had been in the Cloud Recesses when he was but a youth was kind (to save an injured rabbit and find him a companion), friendly (enough to touch the lonely heart of a quiet boy), helpful (he coached Nie Huaisang when he needed help with his studies) and dearly loved his siblings.

...So where had the rumours come from?

He was the one who set Wei Wuxian up!

Jin Guangshan had said that. About A-Yao.

Dage had also accused-no, pointed A-Yao out as the perpetrator who had caused his qi deviation, through a long, patient, calculated move using the skill that Lan Xichen himself had taught him.

A-Yao-no, Jin Guangyao had used *HIM*. To *kill* Dage.

Is it really so farfetched to think that Jin Guangyao would use rumours to besmirch Wei Wuxian's reputation? To paint him as a demon when, in fact, he had been the one to abandon godhood twice to ensure their victory?

Wei Wuxian turned to Lan Xichen, who snapped out of his thoughts, but still looked as if someone had smacked him with a live mackerel for no apparent reason.

"You should be proud, Zewu-jun. Lan Zhan will be the first person to achieve immortality and ascend in the Lan Clan," he digs and Lan Xichen just stared at him.

"Wangji... What happens to Wangji now? You are no longer..." he hesitated. "You are the God of Renewal. Will Wangji still be a martial god?"

When you are no longer a pair...? he didn't voice out.

Wei Wuxian's smile became more genuine at the obvious concern in Lan Xichen's face. Lan Wangji reached out and gently squeezed his brother's elbow.

"Lan Zhan is Hanguang-jun," Wei Wuxian answered simply, "The Bearer of Light. The Bringer of Hope(2). The Sun and Sky to my Moon and Stars."

"Oh," Lan Xichen thought about it.

The Sun and Sky to the Moon and Stars.

That wasn't so bad. His brother would still have his other half. He didn't cause an irreversible, eternal loss to his little brother because of his prejudice and misjudgment. His brother would not suffer even more because of his mistake and naivety.

"That's good," he said, finally. He reached out to hold his brother's hand on his elbow. "Thank you, Fuxing Zushi."

Then a thought occurred to him and he whispered, "You are also Fuxing Mushi. You are A-Yuan's mother."

"That's right," Wei Wuxian confirmed recklessly and Jiang Cheng facepalmed.

"A-Yuan is very important you know," Wei Wuxian said. "I'm so glad that the Lan Clan acknowledges him and treats him so well."

The way he delivered those lines gave Lan Xichen a feeling that if his child had been treated less than stellar, the Lan Clan would be seeing a lot of collateral damage from the wrath of a god.

"Wangji," Lan Xichen swallowed, a realisation coming to him. "Wangji's injuries. You healed them."

"Oh yes," Wei Wuxian confirmed. "I was still learning how to do healing since it's really not my forte. Didn't do as good a job as I hoped and it took longer than I wanted."

"Wei Ying did his best," Lan Wangji said and Wei Wuxian gave him a sweet smile.

"Enough, you two," growled Jiang Cheng looking as if he wanted to lob Sandu at his brother's head. "Focus!"

"Oh yes, of course," agreed Wei Wuxian before turning to the general public at hand. But before he could say anything, a screech of horror from Sect Leader Jin distracted him and jarred Lan Xichen from his spiraling thoughts.

"My goddess... my goddess... it cannot be.." Jin Guangshan muttered, staring at Wei Wuxian as if only making a connection to the Yiling Laozu to the chthonic goddess he had offended.

"Oh, look. It's the desecrator of temples," Wei Wuxian said, a look of disgust on his face as he took steps away from Jin Guangshan, as if his very presence repelled him. "You're famous in heaven now, you know."

The cultivators gathered shared looks as they thought of the rumours that had been circulating about the gold-clad sect leader.

"No one ever had the audacity to do what you did," Wei Wuxian said, looking at his fingernails, which was painted blood red. "To think yourself beyond reprisal is one thing, but to offend a god knowingly... tsk tsk."

"Even Xiwangmu is angry," he said, putting down his hand to smile sharply at the Jins. "She's announced that no god, Underworld or Heavenly, will ever offer assistance to LanlingJin until Jin Guangshan is made to pay for all his known crimes."

"That means, if there is a famine, your people will starve. If there is a flood, your people will drown. If there is a plague, your people will die. No amount of praying will help," Wei Wuxian said.

"And since his crimes is long," here, he turned to Jiang Cheng, who took his cue to pull out the list of crimes that Lan Xichen, Lan Wangji, Nie Huaisang and he had compiled. "It'll be some time before her anger or mine will be assuaged."

He smiled thinly at the gold clad cultivators present and said, "Best to hope that there's no natural disasters waiting to happen to LanlingJin in the next decade or so, yeah?"

The Jins looked at each other, swallowing hard as the gravity of their situation slowly sunk in.

"Of course, that list is just the tip of the iceberg. There's plenty more listed in his files in Diyu," Wei Wuxian said. "But that's for Yanluo Wang to decide on his punishment."

"Yan-Luo-Wang..." Sect Leader Yao repeated weakly, sitting down on the floor as if his legs had turned into jelly.

"Yes, he's technically my superior," Wei Wuxian said in a matter-of-fact tone of voice. "Though I'm not really considered a part of the 10 Kings of the Underworld, I do share responsibilities with them."

"Under-underworld," Sect Leader Yao parroted again.

"That's right. I'm a chthonic god, not a martial god," Wei Wuxian confirmed with a nod. Then, he tilted his head and looked at all of them with a patronising smile.

"Let me officially introduce myself," he said with a sweeping gesture.

"I am the Beginning and the End. The in between. The change that is inevitable," he said as he walk slowly amidst the gathered cultivators.

"I am the Dusk and the Dawn. The hour and the minute that hails a new day and the end of it."

"I am the God of the Moon and Stars, the compass for travelers and merchants."

"I am the Hailer of Death and new Life."

"I am Fuxing Zushi, the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal," he finished, looking at them all with his head held high and a cold smile on his lips.

"The God of Destruction and Rebirth."

*

*

Chapter End Notes

(1) So, in chapter 4, WWX told JC it was inevitable that LP is burned and destroyed bcoz of WRH (unless he died early). Does that mean that every world, the Sunshot Campaign is a reflection to the upheaval in Heaven? Yes and no. The war might happen but the severity of it depends on the upheaval in heaven.

If the upheaval didn't happen, the Sunshot Campaign would have ended faster. Likelihood, WY would never have managed to escape the first time after ascending bcoz there's less chaos in heaven and they (the Heavenly Guardians) would have stopped him. WY probably would have helped end the war from heaven. Or descended as an avenging Martial God hahaha. Yeah, dun tell him he f-ed up by absconding his post.

But that's just one likelihood. The Multiverse is confusing >__<

(2) Hanguang-jun is Hanguang-jun. No, LWJ doesn't get a title change. Coz it suits him to a T. He is the God of Light and Hope. The Bringer of Justice and Peace.

Take A Trip

Chapter Summary

Jin Guangyao learns how truly helpless one can feel when confronted by a higher being.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There was silence after his dramatic introduction.

Which was, frankly, a little disappointing and somewhat insulting.

"Destruction..." Sect Leader Yao repeated. "You are the bringer of Destruction."

"Was that all you heard?" Wei Wuxian grumbled after taking a deep breath. "I am the destruction of the Wens, aren't I? The rebirth of the Wen remnants as well."

When the cultivators he faced continued to harbor looks of non-comprehension, he continued, "I was the Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation. The bringer of change...? The -? You know what, forget it."

"It's hard to talk to people with low IQ," Wei Wuxian grumbled to Jiang Cheng who rolled his eyes, partially at his brother's dramatics and partially from the audience's lack of intelligence.

"You're telling me?" Jiang Cheng returned. "I have to work with these assholes. At least your co-workers have some form of virtue if they ascended."

The cultivators looked appalled at his words but Jiang Cheng really couldn't be bothered with appeasing any of them. After today, he had a feeling that he wouldn't be hearing any snide comments about his age or his lack of experience as a sect leader. They wouldn't want to piss off the little brother of the God of Destruction (and Rebirth).

"Anyway, what shall we do with all of you," Wei Wuxian said, clapping his hands together. "Oh, I know. Let's start with Jin Guangshan first."

He pointed at the disheveled Sect Leader, who was mumbling to himself and occasionally shaking his head.

"You can't! You can't do anything to me," the former Chief Cultivator exclaimed when he realised everyone was looking at him. "Do you know who my father is!? He'll get rid of all of you! All of you aren't even worthy to lick my boots!"

"Yeah, he's so not convincing me that he doesn't deserve to be thrown under a carriage," Wei Wuxian commented with narrowed eyes. Jiang Cheng grunted an agreement and Lan Wangji just silently stood beside his (secret) husband to glare judgingly at the suddenly cowering Jin Sect Leader.

"So, what are all of you going to do with Mr Mood Swing here?" Wei Wuxian asked his brother.

"We stripped him of his post as Chief Cultivator," Jiang Cheng reported, feeling satisfaction at seeing the arrogant sect leader reduced to the current mess that he was.

"Strip him of his leadership post," Lan Wangji declared, now staring at the Jin cultivators who were sharing looks of indecision.

"Exile him," added Nie Mingjue with his arms crossed over his chest. For the first time, Jiang Cheng noticed that Nie Mingjue's arms looking much less buff than they did during the war. He looked almost emaciated from his months of disappearance. Whatever Jin Guangyao and Xue Yang did to him must have taken a huge toll on his physical health.

"Hand him over to the women he violated," added Nie Huaisang viciously. "They'll want to castrate him. Among other things."

Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng and Nie Mingjue looked over to Nie Huaisang incredulously. Meanwhile, Lan Wangji thought about it and nodded.

"Fair," he said in agreement.

"O-kay," said Wei Wuxian slowly. "I'll let you guys handle him since you seem to have this one in hand."

"Wait! You can't just decide the fate of the Jin Sect Leader like that!" exclaimed Su Minshan, who clearly did not get the memo on when not to speak unless spoken to.

"Why not?" Wei Wuxian questioned.

"Those were just allegations!" claimed Su Minshan, "You have no proof!"

"No proof?" Wei Wuxian repeated. "Oh, I have plenty of proof. Plenty of witnesses too. I can summon all those wronged souls now, if you want. They'll be happy to answer my summons if only to meet with their old friend here."

He gestured with a thumb at Jin Guangshan. "They are all waiting for him down in Diyu, you know. Eagerly."

Su Minshan looked absolutely apprehensive at that, Adam's apple bobbing as he swallowed hard, but Wei Wuxian just blithely continued.

"Let's start with proof of wrongdoing, shall we?" Wei Wuxian said, gesturing the shadows and out came Wen Ning, looking the same as he did all those years ago since his revival as a sentient fierce corpse.

"Take Wen Ning for example," Wei Wuxian said, gesturing to the fierce corpse who made to stand guard with Xiao Xingchen at the cave entrance. It was obvious to everyone that no one was leaving until the god in the cave said so. "Everyone kept saying that he should be eliminated and the Jins claimed that they burned him to ashes, but guess where I found him?"

He turned to a frightened-looking Jin Guangyao.

"And guess with who?"

"Who?" Lan Xichen asked slowly, dreading the answer he already knew.

"Nie Mingjue. With Xue Yang torturing him down in the underground prison of Koi Tower," Wei Wuxian answered.

"The demonic cultivator?" came whispers.

"Wasn't he supposed to be persecuted?" asked Sect Leader Ouyang.

"Jin Guangshan pardoned him, didn't he? Said that the Chang Clan retracted their statements," answered Sect Leader Yao.

"Hm. Yes. Jin Guangshan did," Wei Wuxian emphasized. "And then Chang Ping and the rest of his clan died of Lingchi, didn't they? Just right after Xue Yang was released. I wonder who did it?"

At that, even someone with low IQ could connect the dots by numbers that Wei Wuxian graciously provided. Looks of horror were exchanged as they began to comprehend how much Jin Guangshan had lied to all of them.

"Baixue Temple was also destroyed because of Xue Yang," Xiao Xingchen contributed. "All because Jin Guangshan wanted to use him to further the studies to reproduce the Stygian Tiger Seal."

The moment the seal was mentioned, a wash of panic overcame the cultivators gathered.

"The Stygian Tiger Seal!?"

"How abominable!"

"Unbelievable! Truly!"

"Is it truly so unbelievable though? Jin Guangshan kept asking Wei Wuxian to hand it over when he was still alive," someone whispered and then the wave of whispers turned on its head.

"How disgusting. Acting so high and mighty all the time when he was the one doing such despicable things."

"Not just a lecher but a power-thirsty tyrant!"

"He didn't even participate in the Sunshot Campaign but claimed all the merits from his sons."

"His bastard son must be the same. He's no better! He's a whore's son, after all."

Jin Guangyao's face changed from being downtrodden to downright furious at that but he had to hold himself back. He couldn't afford to fight against so many cultivators at the same time. Minshan and he were limited in number. He would have to timely utilise the half of the Stygian Tiger Seal that he had fortunately obtained from Xue Yang before his death.

For years, Jin Guangyao had Lan Xichen's backing whenever he needed it. Despite his competency and amiability, many cultivators looked down on him because of his parentage (why should his mother be shamed when his father was the shameful one!?). Lan Xichen had always spoken up for him whenever he was insulted.

But this time, he was truly alone as even the Lan Sect Leader didn't bother looking at him. He was obviously determined not to give Jin Guangyao even a single glance after he'd realised how Jin Guangyao had used him to (attempt to) kill Nie Mingjue.

The one who was looking at him, though, was Wei Wuxian, Jin Guangyao realised with a jolt of fear.

"It was your idea, wasn't it?" Wei Wuxian said. "Your father wanted the Stygian Tiger Seal and you found the blueprint in my study. So you recommended pardoning Xue Yang when Xiao Xingchen and Song Lan captured him and dropped him right into your laps. You knew he had a knack for the unconventional and was willing to learn unorthodox cultivation from my notes."

"Unfortunately for you, Xue Yang was hard to predict and control. The moment you released him from prison, he left to exact his revenge on the Chang Clan and Baixue Temple. He came back, of course, to 'honor' your agreement. But we both know it's mostly because he knew that you would be able to sweep away his wrongdoings and protect him," the god continued. "Isn't that right, Jin Guangyao?"

"No matter what I say," Jin Guangyao said weakly, trying to look small and helpless. "I cannot defend myself against a god. No one will believe me anyway."

Wei Wuxian barked with laughter. "Now you are trying to make me look like a bully when you are nothing but a backstabber."

Without waiting for his reply, Wei Wuxian turned away to speak to Lan Xichen instead.

"Your sworn brother here," Wei Wuxian said, patting Jin Guangyao on the shoulder. "Such a good brother. So good that he not only attempted to murder one by poisoning Nie Mingjue

but also setting up his own blood brother up to be murdered during the altercation between me and Jin Zixun's army at Qiongqi Path."

"What-what are you talking about!?" Su Minshan denied, eyes wild. "YOU killed Jin Zixuan."

"I did," Wei Wuxian admitted, much to Lan Xichen's surprise. "But even if I didn't, the archer you paid off would have. Isn't that right, Jin Guangyao?"

Jin Guangyao's throat bobbed as he swallowed. Did the god really know everything...?

"I do," Wei Wuxian answered him, as if knowing what he was thinking. "You see, Jiangshushu and Yu-furen had been watching us three since the day they died and when I sent them off to their reincarnations, they implied that you and our ostensible Chief Cultivator had a hand in the Jiang Sect's post-war misfortunes. So I had to look into it."

"I had to look into you," Wei Wuxian emphasised, staring gleefully into Jin Guangyao's horrified eyes.

"It was really fascinating, your file," the god drawled. "Yours... and your mother's."

Jin Guangyao's reaction was downright visceral.

He lunged forward to grab the god's rich robes which flowed out his fingers like water when Wei Wuxian merely stepped away from him. Jin Guangyao was stopped from lunging after the god a second time by the two swords at his throat. Bichen and Sandu hovered close on each side of his jugulars but he didn't care.

"Don't touch her! Don't do anything to her!" he exclaimed, completely losing his composure and forgetting everyone else present.

"Hm. And here I thought you loved no one else but yourself," said Wei Wuxian, still looking unaffected by what had just transpired. He had clearly meant it as a test. "You even betrayed Lan Xichen's trust to further your ambitions, so I thought you didn't care for anyone. I mean, you cared for your father's regards, but I think that's mostly for self-gratification. Make the man who threw you away accept you and regret his decision to abandon you. But alas, your father is a classic toxic narcissist that could love no one but himself. Kind of like you. Apple really doesn't fall far from the tree, huh?"

Seeing the still furious expression on Jin Guangyao's face, Wei Wuxian just waved dismissively, "Oh, don't worry. Your mother's already reincarnated. Her name on the file has already been wiped clean. I mean, why should she be affected by things that are no longer of her concern after death?"

Wei Wuxian said with a shrug. "The sins of the father should not be shouldered by the son and vice versa."

"Similarly," he continued with a sharp smile at Jin Guangyao. "The sins of a son should not affect a mother."

Jin Guangyao trembled at his words. "My mother- My mother..."

"She's not going to suffer for your transgressions," Wei Wuxian assured him. "Your sins are your own. Your punishment is yours to bear. Even if she would have liked to shoulder it for you."

Jin Guangyao swallowed, finally calming down. "She would have."

"That's why you should be glad that she's already moved on," said Wei Wuxian, shaking the sleeves of his robes as if to shake off Jin Guangyao's dust on him.

"She doesn't have anything to do with this," Jin Guangyao agreed. "Any of this."

"Good that you know-"

Wei Wuxian's words were cut off when an array lit up around him. Su Minshan, Jin Guangyao and three other cultivators wearing similar uniforms of the MolingSu stood in a circle around the god, trapping the black-clad being in the array.

"Wei Ying!"

"Wei Wuxian!"

"Jin Guangyao! What are you doing!?" demanded Lan Xichen. "Have you not done enough!?"

"Er-ge, I can't let this false god continue to hoodwink everyone," Jin Guangyao claimed, taking out the Stygian Tiger Seal to power the array even further.

"A-Yao, you- really-," Lan Xichen shook his head in disbelief as the person whom he had once trusted continued to dig his heels in. He looked ready to pull out his own sword just like his brother did.

"You are going to bring death upon our heads!" Sect Leader Yao exclaimed, looking on in horror as he joined the other cultivators in backing away to the walls of the cave.

"You're not a god!" Su Minshan shouted in denial. "Nothing but a false being! We've trapped you!"

"Hm? Really? Is this your best attempt at subjugating me?" Wei Wuxian asked nonchalantly, inspecting the array with a bored face. "Hmph. You used the wrong sigils for here, here and here. Also, even if they are correct, none of you would be able to power it. Even collectively and with the Seal."

He waved his hand like he was swatting a fly and the whole array just... collapsed.

Jin Guangyao screamed as the Seal turned red, cracked and splintered into pieces in his hand, searing the skin off his palm. Su Minshan and his disciples stepped back in shock, faces completely drained of blood.

"Nice try, but that was rather pathetic," Wei Wuxian said in a patronising tone. "What's wrong? The other demonic cultivators not living up to Xue Yang's footsteps?"

"It's really too bad for you that I had to cut his life short, isn't it?" the god sneered.

A look of comprehension washed over Jin Guangyao's face as he stared at Wei Wuxian in dismay.

"That's right. I was the one who cut off his lifeline. And in turn, tied it to Nie Mingjue's. Turns out that little asshole had quite some years left to go," Wei Wuxian revealed in a blasé manner, as if cutting off someone's life short to pass the remaining years to someone else was an easy task. "That's how Nie Mingjue survived what you put him through."

"You thought that after all that torture, he would be barely hanging onto his life. So you weren't concern that he escaped, thinking that he would die either way," Wei Wuxian mocked. "And you would be right. He would have died without my interference. Unfortunately for you, I happen to be very good at interfering."

"Now then, shall we continue?" Wei Wuxian asked, gesturing to the chamber at large.

Clearly realising that Wei Wuxian was not playing around, the other cultivators immediately went silent as Jin Guangyao slumped onto the ground, defeated, cradling his injured hand. It was his sword hand and looking at it, Jin Guangyao could see the markings of the Stygian Tiger Seal seared into the flesh of his palm.

It was going to scar.

A permanent reminder of how badly he had failed.

He had thought of every contingency, made every plan, done everything including dirtying his hands with blood and filth. Just so he could earn his place amongst the lofty cultivators and earn his father's affections, which was, on retrospect, quite foolish. How could that man ever love him when he didn't even love his legitimate son enough to mourn for Jin Zixuan after his death?

So foolish.

All for a man who wouldn't even spare a dime to buy his mother's freedom.

Who treated her like nothing but a plaything to be discarded when he was bored with her.

Jin Guangyao wished he had killed his father earlier.

For he knew now that his father's sanity, reputation and life has been ruined by Wei Wuxian's machinations but the god intended to let the man live. Live and suffer the consequences of his actions, ever fearing his inevitable death.

Jin Guangshan would never repent so Wei Wuxian would want him to suffer under the hands of those he had abused.

A Tit for Tat.

And Jin Guangyao? What will happen to him now?

The only known living progeny of Jin Guangshan refocused on Wei Wuxian's words as he continued to tell the gathered cultivators about what was expected in terms of Jin Guangshan's punishment.

"Instead of a Chief Cultivator, an Alliance Council should be selected to avoid bias," Wei Wuxian was saying.

"A Council instead of a Chief Cultivator is a good idea," Nie Mingjue agreed. "Too much power in one person's hand would just result in more people like Wen Ruohan and Jin Guangshan."

"Agreed," Jiang Wanyin said.

"Seconded," Lan Xichen said, quiet and subdued.

"As I am only the judge for the dead, the punishment for the living must be decided and implemented by the Council," Wei Wuxian said.

Which was bullshit, Jiang Cheng decided, but wisely kept his mouth shut. No one needed to know that Wei Wuxian had spent months driving the Jin Sect Leader insane to discredit him.

"Judge- judge- the dead?" Sect Leader Yao stuttered.

"Yes, I'm the judge that all cultivators will see before they head off to their next reincarnations," Wei Wuxian answered gleefully as he watched all their faces of horror.

"Well, everyone one of you except for Lan Wangji," he gestured to the Lan member with a circular motion with his finger. "He can only be judged by Dianxia once he chooses to ascend."

"Choose-?" Lan Xichen's words were interrupted suddenly.

"Wha-! What is so amazing!? What is so amazing about Lan Wangji!?" demanded Su She, absolutely apoplectic with jealousy. "Why him!? Why does he get to ascend!?"

"Well, for one, he's not an asshole like you," Wei Wuxian delivered honestly, completely blunt like a sledgehammer.

Jiang Cheng let out a guffaw before he managed to curb it. Nie Huaisang covered his face with his fan but everyone who knew him knew that he was hiding his laughter behind it.

"For another, he slayed the Xuanwu," Wei Wuxian continued sassing the white-clad cultivator. "Have YOU slayed any legendary beast lately, no? That's why you get to stay here and wait to die."

"And when you do," he grinned. "You get to meet Yanluo Wang and have a nice long visit in Diyu before you come see me for your next reincarnations. Like Wen Ruohan did."

Su Minshan swallowed as he took a slow step back. As if distance would make what Wei Wuxian said any less truer.

"Don't worry Su Minshan," Wei Wuxian assured. "You'll have your welcoming committee in the form of Jin Zixun once you die of the Hundred Holes backlash."

That wiped the smirk on Jiang Cheng's face right off.

"The Hundred Holes? The one that Jin Zixun accused you of casting? The one that sparked the confrontation at Qiongqi Path!?" Jiang Cheng asked, voice rapidly rising in anger. Without waiting for any confirmation, he turned to Su Minshan and lunged at the man, who was too slow to dodge.

Jiang Cheng managed to punch the other Sect Leader a few times in the face with one hand and choking him with the other while screaming, "It was you! You're the cause of everything! I'll kill you!" before Nie Mingjue and Lan Xichen pulled him away. Jiang Cheng fought against them, managing to pull aside Su Minshan's collar, revealing the proof to Wei Wuxian's words when the perforating holes in his chest was revealed to everyone.

"It's true! You really are-! Let me go! I'll kill him!" screamed Jiang Cheng, struggling against the hold of the two older men.

"It's okay, A-Cheng," Wei Wuxian said calmly, "He won't last long anyway. The holes have already reached his vital organs. He only have a matter of months."

"Months is still too long!" Jiang Cheng shouted, but he was visibly calming down as he stopped struggling against the other sect leaders.

"It's months of suffering," Wei Wuxian corrected soothingly. "As oppose to you cutting his head off so easily and painlessly."

Jiang Cheng fell silent, thinking about his brother's words.

"Either way," Wei Wuxian said, turning back to disheveled and beaten up Su Minshan. "You will die and you will come to Diyu. It is an inevitability."

Then he turned to the other cultivators, "Even if any of you beat the odds and manage to cultivate to immortality, it is not a guarantee that you will not die. Immortality is not indestructability."

"This is the end," a sect leader whispered in the silence that proceeded. He slumped onto his butt, looking as if his soul had exited his body.

Wei Wuxian just looked at all of them with an amused look on his face.

"You know, you really shouldn't look so scared," he said. "Not all of you will suffer in Diyu. As long as you don't go around doing disgusting things like this one did."

He jabbed a finger at the crazed-looking Jin Guangshan before he started walking around, looking at each of them and dismissing them one by one.

"Like you," he said to a young cultivator, who looked like he had pissed his pants. "You can go. Just make sure not to shout at your mother ever again. It makes her very sad and it's really unfilial."

"Yes-yes, sir," the young man whispered before he turned to run off in the direction of the entrance, completely abandoning his sect leader.

"You too," he said to another youngster, who looked at his sect leader and then decided to bail without waiting for permission when Wei Wuxian turned to look at him pointedly.

"And you three youngsters," Wei Wuxian said, shooing the three from Meishan Yu. "And Popo, of course."

The Sect Leader of Meishan Yu, Jiang Cheng's maternal grandmother, patted him in the cheek and said, "It's good to see you doing well, child."

Then she took her cue and left.

"And you!" Wei Wuxian pointed at Sect Leader Ouyang, who jumped in shock. "You can take your disciples and go too. You can thank your wife and son for that. Since they make so many offerings to me."

Sect Leader Ouyang looked around, undecided on what to do and Wei Wuxian rolled his eyes.

"Just go. Unless you want to have a visit to Diyu," Wei Wuxian warned.

At those words, Sect Leader Ouyang paled even further.

"Diyu? We're going to Diyu? Are we allowed to do that? Will we see A-Jie?" Jiang Cheng asked, sounding as if he was looking forward to a daytrip instead of dreading a visit to the underworld where souls were tortured for their sins.

"I obtained a special pass today to bring whomever I want to my realm," Wei Wuxian replied and then turned to the remaining cultivators. "So that I can deliver a lesson on why you should *always fear heavenly retribution.*"

Some of them looked downright ready to faint.

"Of course, passage is limited to a number of people. That means all of you," he pointed to the general crowd, excluding the Su Sect disciples, the Jins, the Lans, the Jiangs and the Nies, "can get lost. It's already too crowded in here."

This sparked a frenzy from the cultivators of the smaller sects, all rushing to escape the cave. The gatekeepers, Xiao Xingchen and Wen Ning did nothing to block their way as the majority of the cultivators exited the cave.

Wei Wuxian reached out nonchalantly and snagged the collar of an escaping cultivator.

"Except for you," he said to Sect Leader Yao, setting the frightened man down on his feet and patting him patronisingly on the shoulder. "You can stay."

"Wha- Why? Why me?" stuttered the man, cold sweat on his forehead.

"Sect Leader Yao," Wei Wuxian said, straightening the man's lapel, "You are so opinionated and righteous. I need a witness that will be trusted by the public to relay everything that happens here on out. After all, what's the point of teaching a lesson if it doesn't **stick**."

Just then, while the god was preoccupied, Su Minshan grabbed Jin Guangyao's wrist and activated his teleportation talisman.

"Wei Wuxian! They're running away!" shouted Jiang Cheng.

But Wei Wuxian didn't react fast enough to do anything as the pair escaped through the portal.

...Only to reappear at the doorway, running back into the cave temple.

Jin Guangyao and Su Minshan stopped in shock at the sight of the interior of the cave and all its occupants.

"What are you doing?" asked Wei Wuxian with an amused tilt to his lips. He gestured to his surroundings. "You are in my temple. My territory. That means you don't go anywhere unless I say so."

The pair just stared at him in dread as Wei Wuxian continued to pick people out to leave.

"You six Lans goodie two shoes can leave," he pointed at the Lan disciples that made up the retinue of the Twin Jades of Lan. "You straight-laced Nie disciples can go too. Oh, you want to stay? Tough. Get out. I only accounted for your Sect Leader and Second Young Master."

"Wha-What about us?" asked a Jin cultivator softly. His knees seemed to be knocking together.

"Of course you're staying. Don't you want to see your late young masters, Jin Zixuan and Jin Zixun?" Wei Wuxian drawled.

That only made the knee knocking worse and Jiang Cheng swore that he could smell cold sweat and pee wafting from the Jin cultivators. Serves them right. They've been strutting around with their nose in the air for far too long.

"I didn't account for the Su disciples," Wei Wuxian said, rubbing his chin as he contemplated the three huddling cultivators that tried to help their sect leader trap him. "I suppose you can leave."

They knelt down on the floor to kowtow to him, pleading for forgiveness and thanking him for his mercy in turns.

"Just get out," Wei Wuxian said with a dismissive wave. "And choose a better sect leader next time. One that doesn't use you like patsies."

In the end, there were only Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng, the Nie brothers, the Lan brothers, the Jins, Sect Leader Yao, Su Minshan, Xiao Xingchen and Wen Ning left in the cave.

"Alrighty then," Wei Wuxian declared, heading towards the entrance to put his arm around Wen Ning's shoulder. "Let's go see your sister, Wen Ning."

"Jiejie? I can see Jiejie?" Wen Ning asked, clearly not expecting it.

"Of course," Wei Wuxian said, stepping out of the cave and pointing straight ahead. "She's just right there."

Right there meant across the cave entrance in a pavilion floating over dark waters.

Lan Xichen stepped out of threshold of the cave into a night world filled with starlight and the bright moonlight beaming down at them. Just a minute ago, the cultivators from the smaller sects had been running out of the same doorway into afternoon daylight, but the moment Wei Wuxian stepped over the threshold, everything outside turned dark.

Instead of the stone steps they had climbed to reach the cave entrance, there was a broad wooden pier stretching to the pavilion where two women waited.

"Jie!" Jiang Wanyin called out, leaving them behind to sprint after Wen Ning, who was already halfway down the gangway.

"While they are reuniting," Wei Wuxian said, "let's give them some privacy and go this way instead. Lan Zhan, if you'd please bring Sect Leader Jin along."

The moment Jiang Wanyin and Wen Qionglin reached the pavilion where their sisters awaited, their end of the pier disconnected, folding in onto itself. With a wave of Wei Wuxian's hand, the pier diverged to another direction.

Wei Wuxian walked down the pier, his luxurious robes sweeping behind him. Lan Xichen had no choice but to follow as Lan Wangji confidently strode forward, mercilessly (and quite rudely) dragging Jin Guangshan by the back of his robes. Behind them, the others followed at a slower pace. Xiao Xingchen was last in line and it was obvious that he was gently but surely herding them along.

Behind them, the cave entrance flickered out of existence, which made Sect Leader Yao blubber in panic.

"What-what is going to happen to us?" he asked no one in particular.

"Nothing," Xiao Xingchen answered. "We're just here to visit."

"That's right. No one is going to get dragged into Diyu by Horse-Face and Bull-Head," Wei Wuxian called out, not looking behind as he confidently strode into a large pavilion with 8 pillar carved into the shaped of fierce dragons.

In the centre of the pavilion, there was a raised dais with a heavy wooden table and an equally heavy chair. On both sides of the dais, there were two small pools of water. When Lan Xichen looked up, he could see that the ceiling was painted with a complex and comprehensive array written in antiquated texts.

"A subjugation array," Wei Wuxian answered his unspoken question. "It's for unruly souls that try to fight verdicts given by the judges of Diyu."

"But since none of you are dead, it won't work on any of you," Wei Wuxian assured with a smile, circling the only table to sit facing them. "However, it's not like you can go anywhere without my say so. So essentially you're stuck here until I say otherwise."

He opened his arms to indicated the silent world.

"Welcome to Youming*."

*

*

End of Chapter 15

Chapter End Notes

*Youming - Serene darkness. Another name for Diyu that I chose for WWX's realm because it suits him.

My next update will probably be next week as I'm a little busy for the rest of the week.
See ya!

Behind Which Door

Chapter Summary

All the visitors get a glimpse of Jin Guangshan's descent into sin and what awaits him after death.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Why have you brought us here?" Lan Xichen questioned, looking around in curiosity. By all rights, he should be wary at being brought into the underworld like the other cultivators, but Wangji's calm demeanor assured him that there was nothing to fear, especially since Wei Wuxian had already confirmed that no one would be dragged into Diyu.

There was nothing in Youming except for the moon, the stars and this single pavilion surrounded by large lotus-shaped lanterns floating in the body of water that stretched as far as the eyes can see. Even the pavilion that housed the Jiang siblings and the Wen siblings had disappeared from sight.

Lan Wangji was standing over Jin Guangshan, while Xiao Xingchen stood behind Su Minshan. Meanwhile, Jin Guangyao was being watched over by his two older sworn brothers. Nie Huaisang was standing by the side while the other Jin cultivators and Sect Leader Yao were huddled on the other side.

"Well, you wanted to see proof, right?" Wei Wuxian said. "Let's look at the life of one Jin Guangshan, shall we?"

With that said, he turned to the small pool on his left. Lan Xichen shuffled over to look into the pool to see what was in it, with the others following as well.

*

*

A young Jin Guangshan, barely of age, was throwing rocks at his cousins.

He laughed uproariously when one of his younger cousins were hit in the head, causing him to bleed profusely.

He was clearly a spoiled child, the only son of a wealthy and neglectful sect leader. He'd never been denied of anything and had no friends, only sycophants who always told him whatever he wanted to hear.

He always got whatever he wanted.

Either his father would pay for it or he would scheme for it, often at the expense of others less fortunate than him.

The first time he'd been denied was when he'd fallen in love (lust) with a young pretty girl who was a commoner working as a maid in Koi Tower. She was about to marry her childhood sweetheart and didn't want Jin Guangshan. She'd told him as much, as polite as she could.

He didn't like that.

Oh, he didn't like that at all.

When he was done with her, she laid limp and lifeless on his bed, having bled out while he had her way with her as roughly as he could out of spite. He'd perforated her vagina and caused her massive internal bleeding that he'd only noticed after he woke up to her cold body beside him, a big pool of dried blood between her thighs.

He'd panicked because he had killed someone. Someone who wasn't even a cultivator.

If anyone ever found out about it, he was ruined.

It was her fault! Why did she have to say no!? All she had to do was marry him! And he would have given her the world!

(He completely ignored the fact that his father would never have let him marry a commoner, someone of no status and could offer no political advantage.)

Jin Guangshan had ran away from his bedroom and immediately told his father, apprehensive of what his old man would do to him but fearful of the consequences of murder. His father had thinned his lips and asked him where the body was. Then he had told him that he would 'take care of it'.

He didn't know what that meant and he didn't care. If his old man wanted to make it all go away, Jin Guangshan was not going to complain about it.

For a few days, he was paranoid that someone would find out about what he had done. But as the weeks passed and nothing happened, his confidence slowly returned. He'd literally gotten away with murder after all. Whatever his father did, it worked!

From then all, it was as if there was nothing barring him doing anything he wanted. His father's name was more than enough to remind people why they should never mess with Jin Guangshan and if he decided to push things further, there was nothing a little money couldn't solve.

Everyone had a price.

Even the so called pure ones, who wanted to wait for marriage and have a simple life with a family. All he had to do was go to their fathers and introduce himself as the heir / sect leader of the LanlingJin and they would readily marry their daughters to him. (Later, this ploy worked with Mo Xuanyu's mother.)

And if he wanted to turn them into whores, he would. All he had to do was trumped up debts their families had inadvertently gotten and put pressure on them to sell their daughters and nieces to whorehouses for him to enjoy. He didn't even have to do it personally. All he had to do was just wave some banknotes at the debt collectors and point them to the family in question.

It worked with Meng Shi.

He'd seen her when he'd been visiting Yunping and was interested in her but her father refused his suit, somehow already knowing of his reputation. Annoyed, but not showing it, he retreated.

Only to pay some local thugs to make sure that Merchant Meng's family business failed. They harassed the poor man's shops and looted as many of his shipments as they could. The debt collectors were also very amiable to his suggestion and when he returned a year later to Yunping, he was able to enjoy the fruits of his 'investment'. It was a pity that he hadn't been able to buy her first time at the brothel but an experienced whore could just be as good.

Furthermore, the knowledge that Meng Shi didn't even know he was the one who destroyed her family made it all the more... enjoyable for him.

When his father told him that he had to get married, for the sect and his reputation, he was disgruntled to find that it was to a harpy. At least she was pretty. For a few years, at least. After she had his son, she just.. wilted and he was disgusted to even touch her. Not that she cared, it was clear on her face that she didn't want him touching her.

As long as he didn't bring his whores to Koi Tower, she won't nag at him. That was all that mattered.

On occasions, Jin Guanshan would face resistance in the form of fathers or husbands who would come to demand justice, only to be met with forceful removal from his home. One time, he remembered, the fiancé of a woman he had (forcibly) bedded attacked him, only to be met with a vicious kick from him. Enraged by the man's audacity, he'd continued to kick the commoner until his head caved in.

After his father died, his position as Sect Leader came with both perks and annoyances, such as dealing with other cultivators. The resistance he once had from the families of the women he ~~raped~~ bedded dwindled significantly, since no one in Koi Tower cared if there were complaints about his conduct nor could the powerless do anything about it. He was also very good with words and knew what to say to seem like a capable and decisive leader as well as a role model, so many of the smaller sects followed his lead willingly, lending him credibility and influence.

In addition, Jin Guangshan was an opportunist.

When Wen Ruohan gave him a choice to become allies (his subordinate, let's be honest, Wen Ruohan would never see him as an equal) he took it. It kept his little family, his sect and most importantly, HIM safe.

And sure enough, one by one the other major sects fell and suffered because of Wen Ruohan, and Jin Guangshan, he patted himself on the back.

That was, until the sects banded together to dethrone the tyrant Chief Cultivator, with Wei Wuxian at the helm with a weapon so powerful it could rewrite death.

Of course, Jin Guangshan had to have it. And of course, he would do anything in his power to obtain it.

But since he had a convenient patsy to do his work in the form of Meng Yao, he could just cross his arms and sit back to reap the rewards. And if anyone called him out for it, he could just throw that stupid child out. Everything was done by him anyway. Everything was done in Meng Yao's name.

No one would know.

*

*

"Even until now, he still denies that anything is his fault," Wei Wuxian commented, settling back on his chair with a flip of Jin Guangshan's file. When he looked up, he blinked at the myriad looks of disgust on the cultivators' face, even from the other Jin cultivators.

"You're surprised?" he asked, nonplussed at their reactions. "This is merely just a skim of his history. If we were to go through each and every one of his wrongdoings, we would be here for days."

"No," Lan Wangji said firmly and Nie Mingjue vehemently agreed.

"We've seen enough," the older man said.

"You- you ruined my mother's family!" Jin Guangyao screamed, lunging at his father who didn't have the time to react before his son was on him, choking him with his bare hands.

"You destroyed everything!"

Wei Wuxian watched for a long moment before turning to the other silent cultivators, "Um, is anyone going to stop him?"

"No," Lan Wangji repeated.

"We should," Lan Xichen lamented, but Nie Mingjue just said, "No, not really."

Wei Wuxian sighed. "I know everyone just wants to wash their hands clean of Jin Guangshan and make him Diyu's problem but I really can't let anyone die here today."

Lan Wangji expression minutely turned mulish as he reached out and pulled Jin Guangyao off his father, whose face was already turning blue.

"Sorry, Meng Yao," Wei Wuxian told the smaller man who was struggling against Hanguang-jun's hold. "Can't let him die here."

"He's the one who wanted you dead!" Jin- Meng Yao screamed at the god. "He told me to do it and I did it! He destroyed my grandfather's business and my mother's life! I did everything he told me to do! He ruined my mother! And I helped him! I helped him kill you! You and Dage!"

"Yes, and you and he will suffer for it," Wei Wuxian answered him, completely unmoved by the tears streaming down Meng Yao's cheeks as he lamented his mother's suffering.

Jin Guangshan, now having recovered his breath, crawled away and scrambled to the only place he could run to, the pier that was attached to nothing.

"Where does he think he's running to? You know what, why don't I give you a little satisfaction?" Wei Wuxian said to Meng Yao, gesturing to the pier, which suddenly grew longer, connecting to a large stone door with 2 elaborate carvings of tall columns. "A glimpse to the future that awaits our ostensible Sect Leader Jin."

By now, Jin Guangshan was already half way down the gangway and as he reached the door, it opened to reveal the sixth level of hell, the Hell of Copper Pillars (1), where sinners who indulged in deviant sexual misconduct and adultery were forced to embrace a red-hot, burning copper pillar, die from burns all over their bodies and then be reborn repeatedly to suffer this form of perpetual punishment.

Jin Guangshan screamed at the sight of the souls writhing as the burns spread over their naked bodies. He fell onto his butt, scrambling to get away from the stone doors. Even from a distance, everyone in the pavilion could feel the heat wafting from the torturous realm.

From within, one soul reached out to him, almost charred black from the heat, shrieking, "Uncle, help me!"

"No! No! Don't come near me!" Jin Guangshan screamed, covering his face with his arm.

"Oh, what a coincidence. It seems Jin Zixun might be joining us. What do you Jins think?" Wei Wuxian asked, turning to the other Jin cultivators, one of which had outright fainted. "No? Hm. Well then."

He waved his hand and the pier detached from the gates of Hell, the heavy stone doors grinding shut and taking Jin Zixun's painful screams with it.

"Don't worry, Jin Guangshan," Wei Wuxian called out to the Sect Leader, who was now crawling slowly away from the edge of the pier. "You'll be seeing your nephew again soon. Joining him there too."

Jin Guangshan burst into tears pathetically as the realisation of his future fate struck him. "No...no no no."

He continued to crawl to another direction, only to be met with another stone gate with carvings of 2 flour mills.

"Is that...?" Lan Xichen's question was interrupted when the stone gates opened, the edges creating a grinding sound that screeched in their ears.

Two red-skinned demons were by a giant round stone mill roughly the size of his pavilion, pushing the handle as a third nonchalantly dropped a screaming man into the hole at the top of the mill. The man was still screaming as his limbs were caught by the moving stones and crushed into mush.

Everyone in the pavilion, including Wei Wuxian, cringed at the sound of the flesh, bones and cartilage being grinded into pulp as blood gushed from the opening of the mill.

"Yeah, not my brightest idea to open that gate," Wei Wuxian commented, waving a hand at the gate. The portal shut with a resounding slam and disappeared out of sight. "But then again, I don't think the other gates are any better."

Now mute with fear, Jin Guangshan crawled feebly back to the pavilion. He wheezed breathlessly as if he had ran a marathon instead of just crawling around like the cockroach that he was.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry... please please please," he begged pathetically, curling up into a ball in front of Wei Wuxian's table.

"Oh, it looks like the scare actually knocked his sanity back into place," Nie Huaisang commented, satisfaction written plainly on his face.

"If that scared him, it's no wonder he didn't join the war efforts," Nie Mingjue chipped in.

"That's only two levels and there are 18 levels of hell waiting for him," Wei Wuxian joined in. "Someone has a heavy debt to pay in terms of karma."

"Good!" Meng Yao exclaimed, eyes red from tears and anger. "I'll gladly pay my due if I get to see him pay for his!"

"Is that so?" Wei Wuxian said, contemplating Meng Yao. "I suppose you will have your chance when you pass."

"Now then, moving on," Wei Wuxian continued, clapping his hands before resting his chin on his palms with a cheerful smile. "Do you want to see the proof of Jin - my mistake - Meng Yao's wrongdoings?"

Nie Mingjue was about to answer when Meng Yao interjected, "Don't bother. I admit to everything."

Lan Xichen gasped aloud, staring at Meng Yao, who in turn gazed determinedly at Wei Wuxian.

"Everything you said is true," he admitted blatantly. "I set you up and even sent my brother Jin Zixuan to Qiongqi Path because I wanted him to die."

"Jin-gongzi!" exclaimed Su Minshan, whose swollen face actually looked pale even with the inflammation. What he had glimpsed from the Gates of Hell had shocked him to his core. Everything that was written about Diyu was true!

"Minshan," Meng Yao said dully. "It is over. There's no point fighting against this anymore."

Wei Wuxian's expression was shrewd as he inspected Meng Yao's face for dishonesty.

"I thought of pleading and begging for mercy but I know now that it is futile," Meng Yao admitted. "You've already seen everything and know what I've done. There's no point in denying anything now."

"Good. You understand that no matter what, you will have to pay for your transgressions," Wei Wuxian said. "But that is after you die."

"For now, you still have some ways to go," Wei Wuxian said, tapping his nail on the table. Then he pointed to the pond on his right. "Would you like to know what you should do before your inevitable end?"

Meng Yao looked towards the pool, walking slowly to it to glimpse into the dark depths.

"It is just a possible future of what you might end up as," Wei Wuxian explained. "There are other options as well, so it depends on whether you want to choose this route."

For some reason, the other cultivators kept their distance as Meng Yao looked into his possible future.

"Will this absolve me?" Meng Yao asked in a shaky tone once he finished looking.

"Not really. Like I said, your sins are your own. You will still have to pay for your past transgressions. But if you choose this path, it will, at the very least, lessen the number of sins you will accumulate further in life," Wei Wuxian explained. "However, if you continue with the trajectory that you are on, your sins might just be on par with your father and you might not even reincarnate."

"If you choose the path you've seen in the Pool of Infinite Possibilities, you will have an opportunity to do good and accumulate better karma so that you can reincarnate to a better

life and maybe even meet your mother again in another life," Wei Wuxian said, but Meng Yao shook his head firmly.

"I hope she will never have the misfortune of having me as a son again," he replied. "I hope she will have a much better life without me. I hope she will be married to a good man and be happy."

Wei Wuxian inspected Meng Yao's countenance quietly and then said, "I think coming here will tell you that we are much more than just our genetics. Our fathers and forefathers do not set a precedence on what we can truly attain. Humans can achieve such good and so much evil. But it is all in the choices that we make."

Meng Yao thought about it and then, he nodded. "I understand. I will do as you recommend."

"You will also divorce your wife," Wei Wuxian said and Meng Yao knew then that the god knew of his relations with his new wife. He was protecting her. By letting them marry, Fuxing Zushi had ensured that the child would be legitimate and despite the shame that Jin Guangyao's name might bring her now, Qin Su would still be protected by her father and her name wouldn't be smeared by having a child out of wedlock.

On their wedding night, they hadn't 'consummated' their marriage on account of his head wound but they really didn't need to as Qin Su was already pregnant. But since they were technically married, Qin Su being pregnant after the divorce was still more socially acceptable than being pregnant out of wedlock. Better to be a divorcee than to be a woman with an illegitimate child.

"Don't tell her," the words rolled out of his tongue before he could stop it but to his relief, Wei Wuxian nodded briefly in agreement.

"She is innocent in this and so is the child," Wei Wuxian said and Meng Yao inexplicably felt a weight lift of his chest.

"My child....," he parroted.

"I will ensure her a safe pregnancy and that Qin Song will be cared for," Wei Wuxian promised.

Meng Yao nodded, knowing that he will never be able to see his child be born and that it was for the better.

Then, he got on his knees and kowtowed to the god, forehead pressing on the floor.

"Venerable Patriarch of Renewal, thank you for enlightening me with the truth about my father and my origins," he said. "And thank you for giving me a chance to redeem myself. I will shed all my finery, break all my ties, shave my hair and wander the world as a pilgrim. I will live by the kindness of people and I will spread word of your mercy."

With that said, Meng Yao stood up, took off his hat, his golden belt and his golden robes. He took out a small dagger from his sleeve, grasped his hair by the base of his neck and hacked it

all off. Lan Xichen made a small noise but Meng Yao continued until long locks of his hair laid at his feet and he was left with a short bob. Then he bowed to Fuxing Zushi once more, and then to the cultivators. He said nothing to his former sworn brothers as he slowly walked out of the pavilion and onto the pier.

The pier, without any indication from Wei Wuxian, lengthened beneath Meng Yao's feet when he reached the edge of it, appearing right under his feet and rolling out to connect to a doorway that looked like the cave temple's entrance. When Meng Yao crossed the threshold, it winked out of existence.

"That's it?" Sect Leader Yao asked. "We're just letting him go? Without punishment? Sect Leader Nie, are you alright with this!?"

"Were you asleep while Fuxing Zushi was talking?" Nie Mingjue asked the mousy Sect Leader. "He will still face punishment in the afterlife."

"That's right," Wei Wuxian said, sliding Meng Yao's folder aside with a deep breath. "No matter how much good he does in the future, he will still have to suffer the punishments. But if he starts collecting good karma now, he might be able to reincarnate to a better life after his punishments."

"But who is to say that he will do as he says!?" Sect Leader Yao exclaimed.

Fuxing Zushi just gave him a tight-lipped smile. "Well, I would know, wouldn't I?"

Then the smile tilted wryly, "Just like I know where YOU would be going when you come here."

Wei Wuxian pointed to the pier and a stone door with carvings of two horned demons appeared.

"No! No! No!" Sect Leader Yao begged just as the doors opened and they could see three men strapped to chairs having their tongues pulled out by demons. They were particularly violent about it as they used tongs to reach into the men's mouth and stabbed the pointed ends of the tongs firmly into the wiggling flesh before ripping them out of the screaming men's mouth.

"Hell of Tongue-Ripping(3)," Wei Wuxian said with relish. "Specially apt for people who likes to gossip and lie maliciously."

Sect Leader Yao clamped his mouth shut with his two hands and shook his head, tears and sweat dripping down his cheeks. Wei Wuxian ignored the blubbering Sect Leader and turned to Nie Huaisang and Nie Mingjue.

"Are you satisfied with this result?" he asked.

"Will he suffer as a pilgrim?" Nie Huaisang asked before Nie Mingjue could answer.

"He will. Plenty. He has seen it too in his future," Wei Wuxian indicated the pool on his right.

"But if the alternative is to continue sinning, a future of suffering is preferred," Lan Xichen continued for him, still staring at where Meng Yao had disappeared to.

"Neither of you will ever see him again," Wei Wuxian contributed, unsure if that would reassure Nie Mingjue or Lan Xichen.

"Then it is for the better," Nie Huaisang said. "Because if I ever see him again, I will kill him myself."

"Fair," Wei Wuxian said. "He was supposed to die by your machinations. But I think I prefer to see the Nie Huaisang I remembered in Cloud Recesses to be free of this kind of burden."

Nie Huaisang's dark expression cleared as tears came to his eyes, "Thank you, Wei-xiong."

Wei Wuxian nodded, then turned to the silent figure still kneeling at Xiao Xingchen's feet, "As for you, Su Minshan, your deeds with the Hundred Holes curse has sealed your fate. There is nothing you can do except to accept your future, in the mortal world and in the afterlife."

Su Minshan laughed, a tinge of desperation and lunacy in his tone as he said, "Who are you to judge me!? You and that arrogant Lan Wangji! Always strutting around like you were all better than us! You're NOT!"

"Your biggest vice is your jealousy. Not us," Wei Wuxian reprimanded, looking as if he couldn't care less if Su Minshan heard his words. "It's plain that you regret nothing."

"I don't regret it! I'd do it all over again! Jin Zixun is nothing! I'll kill everyone of you if I have to!" the Su Sect Leader exclaimed, looking frantic as he fought against Lan Wangji and Xiao Xingchen's subduing grip. "No! I'll do it because I want to!"

"And this is why I cannot be bothered with teaching you a lesson," Wei Wuxian grumbled. He had taken a chance with Meng Yao after he'd found out what Jin Guangshan had done to Meng Shi's family and was quite gratified that Meng Yao had taken his advice.

This Su Minshan, however, was a lost cause just like Wen Chao. They can talk with bravado all they want but when they are confronted with their own mistakes, they would blame anyone and everyone but themselves.

"Lan Zhan, I will entrust you with handling this errant 'child' when you return to the mortal world," Wei Wuxian said to his husband and Lan Wangji nodded.

"He won't have much time left since I've cut short his lifeline to give to someone else more deserving," the god continued, ignoring Su Minshan's bellow of outrage. "Someone who can do more good in life than an asshole who thinks he is better than anyone despite not doing anything noteworthy."

"Truly a waste of space," Wei Wuxian said pointedly, staring at Su Minshan. "Maybe this one will be better off as livestock in his next 100 reincarnations. You know, for daily consumption."

That shut Su Minshan up real good.

Or maybe it was the Lan silencing spell.

Either way, it was an improvement to the current situation.

Wei Wuxian rolled his eyes before he stood up and circled his table, addressing the Jin cultivators this time. They fell to their knees even before Wei Wuxian could say a single thing.

"You will report to your elders what you have seen today, no embellishments and no lies," Wei Wuxian warned the cowering cultivators. "When you return, you will relay the message that your Young Master Jin Zixuan entrusts to you."

At these words, Jin Zixuan appeared from a side door they hadn't noticed before.

"Jin-gongzi!" they chorused, looking relieved to see their late young master. But Jin Zixuan didn't return their regard, merely addressing them coldly.

"I am no longer a young master of the Jin Sect," he said, standing proudly in his black clothes lined with lavender. "I have let go of that life."

"But my mother and son is still in the ephemeral world," Jin Zixuan continued. "And so, I return to face you all to relay to the elders that my mother will be the Acting Sect Leader until my son is of age."

"Even as we speak, she is now cleaning house and getting rid of Jin Guangshan's supporters and sycophants," Wei Wuxian informed the others. "Jin Zixuan had been consulting with her for months now and we've decided that this is the best course of action to protect Jin Ling. Jiang Cheng will also be helping but he cannot interfere too much or people will accuse him of trying to take over Lanling."

"How did Young Master Jin speak to his mother?" Lan Xichen asked. As far as he knew, Jin Zixuan didn't ascend and therefore did not have the ability to visit the mortal world like Wei Wuxian did.

"Through dreams," Lan Wangji answered. "Wei Ying can manipulate dreams."

"Technically, I can pull people's consciousness into my realm temporarily when their mind is deep in sleep," Wei Wuxian corrected. "I can't manipulate dreams but I can manipulate my world."

"Is... is that how you communicated?" Lan Xichen asked, connecting the dots. It would explain why Jiang Wanyin and his brother seemed to be in an amiable relationship despite their lack of interaction. He'd expected Wangji to be very hostile with Jiang Wanyin

considering the rumours about him killing Wei Wuxian. They probably cleared the validity of that misconception with Wei Wuxian in their dreams.

"Yes," Lan Wangji answered. "Wei Ying wanted to gather all the evidences before the confrontation to avoid any untrue accusations."

Lan Xichen hesitated for a while before bowing low to Wei Wuxian.

"This one apologises to Fuxing Zushi for being so incompetent as to allow so many transgressions of the Jin Clan to happen without consequences," Lan Xichen said. Before Wei Wuxian could respond, he continued, "I knew that Jin Guangshan was a womaniser but I did not speak out against his behaviour when I should have."

"None of us did," countered Nie Mingjue. "He is our senior. His conduct should have been governed by the generation before us. Do not take the burden of the blame upon yourself."

"Nie Mingjue is right," Wei Wuxian said before Lan Xichen could reply. "The sins of the father is not the son's responsibility to bear. Remember that."

Lan Xichen fell silent for a while, clearly remembering Meng Yao. Then he nodded in acquiesce.

"Thank you for healing Wangji and caring for him. And thank you for saving Dage," Lan Xichen said instead. "And for giving A-Yao another chance."

"He gave himself another chance," Wei Wuxian countered. "And Nie Mingjue's life is saved by his brother's belief in me."

"As for Lan Zhan," Wei Wuxian said, turning to bat his eyelashes at Lan Wangji. "You don't have to thank me, brother-in-law."

Lan Xichen stopped.

"What!?"

*

*

End of Chapter 16

Chapter End Notes

Excerpts from: <https://diyubianxiangtu.wordpress.com/2009/04/29/the-hell-of-pillars/>

The Hell of Pillars

Most who suffer in this hell indulged, before their deaths, in sexual misconduct and adultery. These people will be sent to this particular hell after their death. They will be forced to embrace a red-hot, burning copper pillar, die from burns all over their bodies, and then be reborn repeatedly in this hell as a form of perpetual punishment. This pain and suffering will be unbearable. Once these people can eliminate their bad karma, they are often reborn as animals. Ending their karma as animals; if they are to gain a human form, usually poor, despised, have short or harsh lives.

The Hell of Mills

People who commit sexual misconduct Or who have many partners or who pay for sex, will fall into this hell after their death. When alive, they enjoy having many sexual partners; After death, they will be milled into mince. The retribution for sexual indulgence is incredibly horrible.

Hell of Tongue-ripping

Where those who gossip and spread trouble with their words will repeatedly have their tongues ripped out.

Hair cutting in Ancient China is actually Taboo unless it is due to a death of a loved one. Meng Yao cutting off his hair is actually to signify the death of Jin Guangyao, a part of himself, only to be reborn as a different person. I'm thinking on writing an extra on Meng Yao post-temple confrontation where he wanders as a pilgrim. Is anyone interested?

Jingyue Temple

Chapter Summary

The little educational trip ends and everyone returns to the mortal world.

Chapter Notes

Things are super hectic. Just moved this week and still unpacking. So much unpacking. TT__TT And to top it all off, we all got sick with the flu. No, not covid. Just the flu. Coz it's flu season right now. Horrible. Will be going incognito for another week after posting this.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

This is my life now, Lan Xichen thought as he sat morosely on the elevated chair of a Judge of the Underworld.

After dropping the bomb on him about his little brother's marriage (which he had completely missed), Lan Xichen had gone completely unresponsive, having had too many shocks going through his mind in one day to be able to compute that much information. Wei Wuxian became alarmed at his response and insisted he sit down on his chair to recover from his shock. Lan Xichen had been too out of it to protest even as he vaguely registered that he was sitting on the throne of a god.

Wangji is married to Wei Wuxian.

Wangji is married to Fuxing Zushi, the Yiling Laozu reborn.

Wangji is married and none of them knew it.

Lan Xichen buried his face in his hands, lamenting how all this had come to pass. He had been so wrapped up in appeasing his clan elders, his sworn brothers and his prejudices that

his brother had lost confidence in him to even confide in him about his marriage to Wei Wuxian.

"I didn't break your brother, did I?" he heard Wei Wuxian tentatively ask his brother.

"Xichen just needs some time to get it through his thick head," the familiar, well-missed voice of his Dage said, reassuring Lan Xichen's new brother-in-law (how did that happen!?)

"Yes, Er-ge is a little slow when it comes to things like this," Nie Huaisang chipped in, which was completely unnecessary and mean of him to say so, in Lan Xichen's opinion. He was probably still angry with Lan Xichen for always taking Meng Yao's side.

He had so much to make up for in regards to all his brothers.

Lan Xichen took a deep breath.

"I'm fine," he croaked. Then tried again, better this time, "I'm fine, Lord Wei."

Wei Wuxian made a face, "Please don't call me that. Only my worshippers do that and it's weird if my friends and family does it."

Family. What an odd thought; his brother is married now. And to a god!

Nie Mingjue was right. He needed time to register everything that had happened in their very eventful day.

"Shufu needs to be informed," he said tiredly, sounding resigned and still very shocked.

"Mn," Lan Wangji agreed. "Xiongzhong should tell him."

The nerve!

Lan Xichen made a mental note to include his little brother in the discussion so that their uncle would have someone else to focus his ire on. As a punishment for not informing him about such an important, life-changing event!

"Yes, Zewujun should inform Lan-xiansheng so he doesn't get the shock of his life when I come over with the dowry," Wei Wuxian chirped with a wide smile. He was clearly enjoying himself at the expense of Lan Xichen's misery.

"Dowry," he repeated. "That would mean we need to prepare... bride price?"

Wei Wuxian guffawed. "Send it to Jiang Cheng! We don't need anything here."

He lifted both arms and gestured around his own world.

"Not even paper money?" Lan Xichen asked before he realised how untactful the question was. "Sorry, I didn't-"

Wei Wuxian laughed. "Brother-in-law, you don't have to worry about me here. I have everything I need."

Then he turned to Lan Zhan with a wistful smile. "Everything except Lan Zhan but that's alright. Lan Zhan has to stay in the mortal world for now, for Sizhui."

"Sizhui?" Lan Xichen parroted in confusion and even Wangji tilted his head in askance.

"Who is Sizhui?" Lan Wangji asked.

Wei Wuxian blinked twice before slapping a hand on his mouth, face filled with dismayed shock.

"Oh no," he said, finally pulling his hand away. "I wasn't supposed to tell you A-Yuan's courtesy name."

"Sizhui," Lan Wangji repeated, as if sounding the name on his tongue. Then, he nodded. "Will tell A-Yuan when I return."

"Tell him you gave him that name," Wei Wuxian insisted. "You were supposed to name him!"

"It is a good name," Lan Wangji said with a nod.

"But you were supposed to name him!"

"Dimei(1)," Lan Xichen said with an amused tilt to his lips. "It doesn't matter who named A-Yuan. It is in remembrance of you."

Wei Wuxian's face coloured as Lan Wangji nodded in agreement.

"Stop teas- Wait, what did you call me!?"

After Jin Zixuan finished instructing the Jin cultivators on what they should relay once they returned to Koi Tower, he stood before his whimpering father, curled up at the foot of Wei Wuxian's looming table.

"A-Xuan...?"

Jin Zixuan looked down at his father grasping desperately at the hem of his robes.

"Fathe- Jin Guangshan," he replied, watching the man flinch at his cold tone.

It was odd. For the longest time, he had prized this man's approval and love while he was alive. And even after death, knowing that his father had done those horrible things, he had been devastated at the man his father truly was.

Now, now he just felt nothing.

Perhaps the years in Diyu had tempered the love, disappointment and anger he once had for this man, though his love for his mother had never changed, even growing with the devotion that she had shown him after his death.

Jin Zixuan sighed, staring sadly down at his weeping, pleading father as Wei Wuxian approached him.

"It really is a miracle that I didn't turn out like him," Jin Zixuan mumbled to Wei Wuxian.

"I think it's more the fact that you were very lucky with whom your mother chose for your marriage," Wei Wuxian said. "And I say that not because I'm biased for Shijie."

Jin Zixuan nodded in agreement, "She makes you want to be better for her."

Wei Wuxian hummed. "Also, if Madam Jin had chosen someone bitter and bad tempered, you would have ended up hating your wife and ultimately, cheating on her with another woman."

"I would have turned out like my father," interpreted Jin Zixuan. "Did you see it in your Pool of Infinite Possibilities?"

"Hm," Wei Wuxian hummed. Then he said, "Maybe not as bad as him but... I'm sorry it turned out this way."

"Don't be," Jin Zixuan said. "The one who should be sorry is him. He ruined so many people's lives because of his selfishness and greed. It is inevitable that he would be punished for it."

"Still, it must be hard to see your father this way," Wei Wuxian replied.

"It is. But he was also a distant figure to me," Jin Zixuan admitted. "Rarely in my life and that is only so that he could display me like a trophy. In a way, Zixun was more like him than I."

Wei Wuxian nodded in agreement. He was pretty sure the chances were the two would end up sharing time in the same torture chamber in Diyu some day.

"Thank you," Jin Zixuan said. "If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't have been able to get my head on and pursue my happiness with your sister."

Wei Wuxian couldn't help the cringe that came across his face and Jin Zixuan actually laughed at his expression. He elbowed the god.

"Come on, let's send off our guests," Jin Zixuan said. "Jiang Wanyin should be done by now."

"You know you can call him Jiang Cheng now, right?" Wei Wuxian replied. "You are family now."

Jin Zixuan paused a second before he returned, "If I do that, the odds are he would pushed me into the water."

"Nah," Wei Wuxian lied.

He totally would and Wei Wuxian would even encouraged it. Just because he was family now didn't mean that the two brothers would play nice with him. Heck, they didn't even play nice with each other.

As if knowing his thoughts, Jin Zixuan just snorted, inelegant for the once young master of the Jin Clan.

"They are coming!" Sect Leader Yao said suddenly, pointing to a pavilion that appeared suddenly in the horizon.

Jiang Cheng and Wen Ning walked down the gangway, turning around occasionally to look back at their sisters, who waved from the pavilion. Jin Zixuan walked towards them and greeted them as they passed. The ex-Jin heir joined the ladies at the pavilion and they winked out of existence in Youming.

"Did you enjoy your time at Wang Xiang Tai (2)?" Wei Wuxian asked as the pier changed direction to the entrance of the cave temple. Everyone started filing down the path towards Blossom Mountain while Lan Wangji dutifully dragged Jin Guangshan and Xiao Xingchen led a tied up (still muted) Su Minshan.

Jiang Cheng nodded, his eyes a little swollen and red. He looked solemn but at peace with the time he had managed to spend with his sister. Wei Wuxian patted him on the shoulder.

"Don't worry, you can still see her in your dreams," he consoled and Jiang Cheng nodded once more in agreement.

"You'll come when Lan Wangji and A-Yuan come over to Lotus Pier, right?" Jiang Cheng asked suddenly. "I made preparations for a simple wedding celebration. Lan Wangji said he'll handle their robes and you said that your official robes will do."

Wei Wuxian smiled awkwardly. "Yeah, sure."

Jiang Cheng's eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"What did you do?" he demanded to know.

"What? Why do you think I did something? My little brother, so suspicious of me," Wei Wuxian said in mock outrage. But Jiang Cheng just gave him a flat stare.

As the other mortals exited the portal, the two brothers hung back to continue bickering.

"Wei Wuxian," Jiang Cheng said in a warning tone.

"Alright, fine," Wei Wuxian gave up. "The Lans might be coming."

"The Lans? I thought they didn't know?" Jiang Cheng asked in confusion. "How many are coming?"

"It depends on whether they want to acknowledge the marriage," Wei Wuxian said with a shrug.

"Acknowledge it? Of course they would. Who wouldn't want their young master to be tied in matrimony with a god?" Jiang Cheng exclaimed.

"Well, Lan Xichen seemed to be okay with it. So likelihood is that he would attend the ceremony. Don't know about Lan Qiren. Gotta gage his response when I drop by with the dowry," the god replied.

"Hey, dowry means you're the bride," Jiang Cheng said with a frown. "Does that mean you're marrying into his family?"

"How does that even work? I mean, I'm a god with a realm to govern," Wei Wuxian returned, continuing to walk towards the temple with Jiang Cheng following him.

"Well, as long as the Lans don't claim that you are part of their clan," Jiang Cheng said. "Your name is still in Jiang Clan registry. So, you are Jiang! Married or not. God or not."

"Aw, Jiang Cheng, you are so sweet," cooed Wei Wuxian as he crossed the threshold into broad daylight.

"Ass," Jiang Cheng returned with a false annoyed expression.

They arrived at the outside of the Temple of Blossom Mountain, where several cultivators were loitering around. At the sight of them, they jumped up, exclaiming aloud in shock.

"What happened!? You've been gone for three days!" Sect Leader Ouyang exclaimed to Sect Leader Yao. "We peeked in on the second day but no one was there! Then Jin Guangyao just appeared suddenly and left without saying anything other than he is no longer a Jin. And his hair is cut!"

His confused eyes landed on Jin Guangshan, as if he had expected the Jin Sect Leader to have been dragged to hell instead of being dragged back to the mortal world.

"We- we-," Sect Leader Yao stuttered in fear as he turned around to look at Wei Wuxian, who just raised an eyebrow at him.

"Three days? " Jiang Wanyin repeated. "It's only been a few hours for us. Huh. Diyu really does mess up time."

"Told you," Wei Wuxian said imperious. "Just be glad it didn't take a year of your life."

"A year!?" echoed Sect Leader Yao in disbelief. Then he clamped his mouth shut again when Wei Wuxian shot him another look.

With a roll of his eyes, Wei Wuxian went over to the Lan and Nie cultivators who were now clustered around their sect leaders and second young masters. Seeing that, the other cultivators gathered around the Jin cultivators, questioning them on what they had seen in Diyu.

"Jin Guangyao appeared suddenly and announced that he is no longer of the Jin Clan. He refused to tell us anything else. Just left after writing a letter of divorce for Madam- Ms Qin," a Nie cultivator explained.

Nie Mingjue nodded. "He is likely headed to his pilgrimage."

"Pilgrimage?" the Lan and the Nie cultivators exchanged looks of surprise.

"To make amends for his sins," Wei Wuxian answered, making the Lan and Nie cultivators snap into attention before they bowed low to him, greeting him in a chorus of, "Fuxing Zushi."

Wei Wuxian nodded in acknowledgement before turning to the two sect leaders.

"I trust that your clans will be able to take care of Su Minshan and Jin Guangshan?" Wei Wuxian asked and the two sect leaders nodded solemnly. "Good. If there are anything else, you can drop by at my temple or shrine to pray to me."

Again, the two sect leaders bowed while Nie Huaisang chirped a, "Thank you, Wei-xiong!"

"Meanwhile, before I forget," Wei Wuxian said, turning to gesture at Xiao Xingchen, who was silently standing beside Wen Ning. Wen Ning nudged the cultivator-in-white and directed him to where the god awaited.

"As I've said before, I'm not an expert in healing," Wei Wuxian started. "So I had to hunt down Yao Wang(3) to ask his guidance. Then he reminded me that I'm actually the God of Renewal."

Xiao Xingchen was frowning in confusion until Wei Wuxian put his hand on his eyes.

"I felt like a complete idiot," Wei Wuxian continued. "When I realised that I could just renew the cells that are the building blocks to your organs."

Xiao Xingchen stiffened with understanding as he felt a tingle in the sockets were his eyes used to be.

"Shizhi," he started, shocked, alarmed and hopeful, all at the same time.

"Of course, Yao Wang still had to teach me how to reconstruct new eyeballs," Wei Wuxian continued chatting, oblivious to the way everyone in the vicinity was staring at them. "That's why it took me so long to do this."

He let his hand fall and told Xiao Xingchen, "Open your eyes, shishu."

With trembling hands, Xiao Xingchen unwrapped the bandage and slowly blinked, completely thrown by the sudden daylight that flooded his newly reconstructed eyes.

"Shizhi," Xiao Xingchen breathed, grasping his martial nephew's sleeve, overwhelmed with the feelings in his chest. "I see- I see you."

Wei Wuxian smiled, bright and untamed.

For people who trembled at the mention of Diyu, the stragglers took a long time to remove themselves from Blossom Mountain, hanging around to eavesdrop on every conversation that Wei Wuxian had with anyone until he turned to stare at them.

At some point, Sect Leader Yao even made an overture to wheedle for mercy to avoid his afterlife punishment. All Wei Wuxian did was lean back, cross his arms and stare at the man until Sect Leader Yao started having cold sweat.

"The only thing you can do now is to do a lot of good for your community, which includes actually going out for night hunts, treating your people well, being courteous and humble, as well as treating your wife nicely," Wei Wuxian lectured the man. "Then, at least, you will have a good reincarnation in your next life and not suffer, instead of being reborn as a pig dragged out to be slaughtered and eaten."

After that admonishment, Sect Leader Yao spluttered an apology and bowed repeatedly before turning tail with the rest of his clan.

Wei Wuxian rolled his eyes and turned back to his husband.

"I have to go now. Qing-jie will be angry if I stay too long," he said, reaching out to squeeze Lan Wangji's hand. "Wait for me, okay? I'll be going to GusuLan in a week or so. Have some work to clear and a few meetings to attend."

"Mn," Lan Wangji said, nodding in understanding. "Will wait."

"Well, gentlemen," Wei Wuxian said to the gathered cultivators, "I'll be taking my leave. Please don't siege Blossom Mountain ever again. Next time round, I will not be so kind."

The loitering cultivators blanched in fear while Nie Mingjue guffawed.

"Next time I come," the Nie Sect Leader announced. "I will bring a big offering. Our best wine for Fuxing Zushi. All the best furnishings for a temple. And a big roasted boar to be distributed amongst the settlers of Yiling, as well as bags of rice for each household. Everyone will know that there's a new temple here!"

"Oh good," Wei Wuxian said, looking pleased. "That would save Wen Ning and Xiao Xingchen a lot of trouble."

He nodded to Xiao Xingchen, who smiled back.

"Wen Ning will be this temple's caregiver from now on," Wei Wuxian explained. "Xiao Xingchen will also start a new sect here with his disciple, A-Qing."

"Yes," Xiao Xingchen agreed. "We are naming it Jingyue(4) Sect."

"Jingyue, the Quiet Moon," Wei Wuxian repeated. "That sounds lovely."

After a moment of contemplation, he waved at the temple and the name at the board above the cave entrance changed to state 'Jingyue Temple'.

"Shizhi!" Xiao Xingchen exclaimed in surprise.

"Jingyue Temple of Huashan," Wei Wuxian said, looking satisfied. He turned to Nie Huaisang, "What do you think, Nie-xiong?"

"It sounds great!" Nie Huaisang replied encouragingly.

"Great!" Wei Wuxian repeated, patting Nie Huaisang on the shoulder. "Then you and Xuanyu can come out here to help Xiao-shishu set up everything."

"What!?" Nie Huaisang exclaimed with wide eyes.

Even Xiao Xingchen paused, feeling awkward.

Meanwhile, Nie Mingjue snorted in amusement.

"Your revenge is complete. Your brother is back to being Sect Leader. This means you will be free to pursue something else, most likely not sabre related," Wei Wuxian said, hitting every point accurately. "Also, you owe me a favor."

That made Nie Huaisang straighten up immediately, nodding his head in instant agreement, "Yes, of course, Wei-xiong. I'll gladly help shishu- I mean your shishu set up his sect!"

Wei Wuxian smiled brightly, with teeth gleaming.

"Great!" he repeated, before saying, "I'll leave all the nitty-gritty details for you to iron out for my shishu."

He turned around to Xiao Xingchen, ignoring Nie Huaisang's pout aimed at his laughing elder brother.

"Nie-xiong is a little flakey but he's actually quite good with the administrative part of a sect," Wei Wuxian said. "So don't hesitate to ask him for help."

"I understand," Xiao Xingchen said, smiling gently at his martial nephew. Wei Wuxian thought that he really did look better without that accursed bandage on his face.

"Welp, time to go before Qing-jie sends Horse-Face after me or something," the god said, heading to the cave entrance.

"Wei Wuxian! Remember your promise!" Jiang Cheng called out, unwilling to let his brother go with one last word.

Wei Wuxian lifted his hand and waved without looking back.

Then, he disappeared through the doorway.

"By the way, what happened to the Blood Pool?" Jiang Cheng asked Wen Ning before he left. "I didn't see it when we were inside."

"Wei-gongzi turned it into a spring so that the temple would always have fresh water," Wen Ning answered.

"Is that what I drank? Holy water?" Nie Mingjue joked. Wen Ning gave an awkward smile and nodded.

"It made you heal faster," Wen Ning agreed.

"Wait, you're not joking?" Jiang Cheng said with a confused frown. "Why didn't he bless the water in Lotus Pier then?"

"Um, you... didn't ask him...?" Wen Ning said awkwardly and Jiang Cheng snorted.

"Fine. I'll do that next time he comes over," he said with a nod.

"Miracle water?" one of the cultivators whispered and Jiang Cheng turned around to glare at the loitering cultivators.

"Why are all of you still here?" Jiang Cheng demanded. "This is a temple! If you are not here to pray, then scram!"

Most of the cultivators indeed scam at that, whispering madly between themselves. Jiang Cheng had a fleeting thought that he should remind Sect Leader Yao to tell all of those gossipers what he saw of his future fate. Just as a warning.

When the rest of the stragglers finally left the temple, Jiang Cheng turned to Wen Ning.

"I'll send you the date for the wedding. Just in case Wei Wuxian forgets to come here to tell you. You and Daozhang Xiao better come," he said. "It's supposed to be a small wedding, but he'll want you there."

"Um, are you sure...?" Wen Ning asked hesitantly.

"Of course," Jiang Cheng said with a frown. "If you don't come, Wei Wuxian would be upset and you wouldn't want that, do you?"

"Of course not! I just- I just thought you wouldn't want me there," Wen Ning stuttered out.

"Don't be ridiculous. It's Wei Wuxian's wedding," Jiang Cheng said firmly. "Everyone who means something to him will be there. So make sure you bring your sister's ancestral tablet."

"Um, I don't- She doesn't-," Wen Ning stumbled.

"Oh, for fuc-," Jiang Cheng closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "I'll have one commissioned for her and when the ceremony is done, you bring it back to Huashan and set up a proper shrine for her."

"Uh, yes, thank you," Wen Ning said quickly. "Thank you, Sect Leader Jiang."

Jiang Cheng nodded and turned to leave.

"That's so kind of you, Jiang-xiong," Nie Huaisang commented as they walked down the path.

"Well, it's also kind of you to 'volunteer' to set up a sect for Daozhang Xiao," Jiang Cheng shot back.

Nie Huaisang harrumphed. "Mean, Jiang-xiong."

Jiang Cheng snorted, then got on his sword.

"You heading back to Gusu?" he asked, directing his question to Lan Xichen, Lan Wangji and their contingent in general.

Su Minshan was also with them. Jin Guangshan had been dragged off by the remaining Jin cultivators, who cited that they would let Madam Jin 'deal' with him. The significant lack of respect shown to their former sect leader was quite telling as the looks of disgust on their faces were still prominent.

The white-clad sect leader nodded.

"There will likely be an Emergency Discussion Conference in a few days to discuss what happened today and the fate of the prisoners," Lan Xichen said. "For now, Madam Jin is probably too busy with Koi Tower to host all of us so we will return first and wait for her missive."

"I will host the Emergency Discussion Conference," Nie Mingjue volunteered. "It'll relieve her of some burdens for now and let her focus on the internal workings of her sect."

"I will inform her," Jiang Cheng said. "I'm heading to Koi Tower to retrieve Jin Ling. It'll help her so she doesn't have to worry about his safety during this strife."

"Well then. We will wait for news from you," Lan Xichen said, bowing to the other Sect Leaders who returned the gesture.

Then, the groups went on their separate ways.

*

*

End Chapter 17

Chapter End Notes

Edited to add: I was informed that I used the wrong form of sister-in law hahaha.

Dì mèi; 弟妹.- Younger sister-in-law

Wang Xiang Tai (Home Viewing Pavilion)

Yao Wang - Chinese god of healing also known as the 'King of Medicine'

静月 (Jìng yuè) - Quiet Moon; is derived from both WY's title as God of the Moon and Stars and XXC's own title as Bright Moon and Gentle Breeze. The quiet refers to WY's realm, Youming, which means Serene Darkness.

Heavenly Gifts

Chapter Summary

The conclusion of the very eventful Discussion Conference. And then, Wei Ying visits the Cloud Recesses.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Just as Fuxing Zushi dictated, a Council of Cultivators were selected. Five in total, one representative from each major sect and one from the smaller sects to protect their interests.

Jiang Cheng appointed one of his surviving elders as part of the council instead of taking the post himself. Mainly because he was too busy taking care of Jin Ling and Yunmeng to take on more responsibilities. Also, because he didn't want the council to constantly look to him to provide guidance on behalf of his brother.

Lan Qiren was chosen as representative of GusuLan, though it was clear he was doing it only to relieve Lan Xichen from the position. The renown teacher had been pale and quiet since appearing at Qinghe for the Emergency Discussion Conference with the Lan Sect Leader. He'd clearly been informed by his nephews of what had transpired with Jin Guangshan and Jin Guangyao. He barely even dared to look at Jiang Cheng's direction, despite his painfully awkward politeness.

Nie Mingjue had presided as host to the Discussion Conference, as promised. Madam Jin even thanked him in gratitude for taking the burden off her shoulders and for hosting her contingent at such short notice.

As QingheNie's most prominent figure (and now most respected person in the cultivation world), Nie Mingjue was chosen as the representative of his sect for the council.

Surprisingly, the one who was chosen for the seat of LanlingJin wasn't an elder, or even a Jin.

"I nominate Luo Qingyang(1) as my representative for LanlingJin," announced Madam Jin. Behind her, the Jin elders kept silent and sullen. Likely, they had been shown an example of what will become of them if they were to hinder Madam Jin in her rule.

Privately, Jiang Cheng thought it was a smart move. Luo Qingyang was known as someone who had stood by Wei Wuxian at a time when everyone, even his own sect, had condemned him. To appoint Luo Qingyang as a representative of the Jins would indicate that the Jins were looking to change for the better, by choosing merit over name or bloodline.

Furthermore, with the way the Jin's reputation had taken a nosedive, a cultivator of another surname would give the other sects confidence that Luo Qingyang would not be acting under the exclusive interest of the Jins.

To top it off, given that Luo Qingyang had gone rogue against the cultivation world because of Wei Wuxian, Jiang Cheng was fairly certain she would not be bullied by any of the men in the council and any decisions made by her would have the backing of Fuxing Zushi.

That was all to say, Jiang Cheng approved of their candidate and briefly wondered how Madam Jin had managed to secure the young lady's acquiescence to return, given she left LanlingJin in bad terms.

The last member of the council of five was Sect Leader Ouyang, who was the least difficult to work with and was fairly vocal in terms of speaking for the smaller sects, though not overly so like Sect Leader Yao.

Speaking of which, the older man now seldom gossiped and spoke only when spoken to, to the point of being tentative and careful with his replies. Whenever someone asked him what he saw in Diyu, his face would pale and he would regale his horrified audience in stutters about the punishments he saw, fear blatant on his face. He would preach against gossip and sexual deviancy as well as how his view in religion had been impacted by the visit.

For his part, Sect Leader Yao had been keeping himself away from Jiang Cheng, which the Yunmeng Sect Leader really appreciated considering how many times the mouthy older man had cornered him to talk his ears off during previous Discussion Conferences.

In the meantime, the fate of Jin Guangshan was decided collectively by the council and the Acting Sect Leader Jin, with absolutely no protests from anyone. The Jins did not even look at their former sect leader, quite obviously ashamed at being associated with the man. From where Jiang Cheng sat, there seemed to be significantly less number of Jin elders present as well. They would have been Jin Guangshan's biggest supporters (read; sycophants) so their absence was very telling.

"You can't do this to me! I'm Jin Guangshan! I am Sect Leader of LanlingJin!" the scruffy-looking vagrant screamed as they dragged him out of the hall of the Unclean Realm to be exiled from his home and sect.

The state of the normally smarmy man gave Jiang Cheng a lot of satisfaction. Apparently, during his stay at the prison in Koi Tower, somehow, his past victims and/or their family members kept gaining access to his prison cell. He'd been beaten up severely, though frankly, Jiang Cheng was extremely surprised that Jin Guangshan hadn't been gutted yet. Maybe they wanted him to live to suffer through his punishment and humiliation.

A punishment that was quite fitting to be honest.

The victims of his sexual assault and bullying demanded that he be castrated so that there would never be another opportunity for him to victimise another girl again. Even Madam Jin advocated for it, citing that the honor of the Jins must be restored by punishing the perpetrator severely. When she said that, the Jin elders sitting behind her visibly started

sweating and fidgeting, clearly cowed by the promise in her voice. To their credit, none of them said anything to advocate for Jin Guangshan. Maybe they too had skeletons in the closet that they were too afraid to air out or make known by speaking out.

No other cultivator spoke out for the disgraced Jin Sect Leader either, knowing that supporting the corrupted man would paint them in a bad light, as well as insult the Yiling Laozu reborn.

And so, the disgraced Sect Leader was stripped of his position, castrated and exiled with his meridians sealed.

It did not take long at all for Jiang Cheng to receive news that Jin Guangshan had been attacked after he was thrown out of the Unclean Realm, with just the rags he wore on his back, still bleeding and howling with pain.

Apparently, the women that he had violated had gathered and hunted him down with homemade weapons, following his cries of pain and injustice to a secluded area where they proceeded to beat him to within an inch of his life.

He could barely crawl away by the time they were done with him.

"They didn't kill him?" Jiang Cheng asked his informer, who shook his head.

"Apparently, they wanted him to live and suffer," the young man said. "So I informed Madam Jin and she sent a physician to see to him so that he wouldn't die of his wounds."

Jiang Cheng hummed, taking a sip of his tea.

"Vicious," he commented. "Making sure he lives so he can continue suffering."

"Women are scary," commented his informer with a nod.

"Hm, Hell hath no fury like a woman's wrath," Jiang Cheng agreed. Then he changed the topic, "What about Su Minshan?"

"The Lan Clan has dismantled MolingSu, citing the crimes of their sect leader as the cause," the young man informed him. "They did not fight against it. The news of him offending Fuxing Zushi must have spread in Moling."

"Mn," agreed Jiang Cheng. "What punishment did Lan Xichen decide for him?"

"The Lan Clan has sealed his meridians as well. They exiled him and now he is wandering the streets like a beggar but is too proud to beg," his informer answered him.

"Never learns, huh," Jiang Cheng said absentmindedly, "Wei Wuxian was right."

Remembering what his brother said about Su Minshan having a limited lifeline and dying of the hundred holes curse, he didn't put much thought any longer on the ignorable man.

Just when he was about to leave the Unclean Realm after the Emergency Discussion Conference, he came across Madam Jin instructing her assistants to send care packages to Qin Su.

"Even if she is no longer our family," Madam Jin was saying, "We should still not be remiss in keeping a good relationship with LaolingQin."

"Has something happened to Ms Qin?" Jiang Cheng asked Madam Jin.

The poor grandmother of his nephew had been having a few bad years since the death of her only son, but looked to have recovered enough to regain her formidable self. Taking charge of Lanling seemed to have given her a purpose beyond caring for Jin Ling. Jiang Cheng was fairly sure the woman would whip the corruption out of the sect soon enough. She was his mother's best friend, after all.

"The poor girl," Madam Jin said with sympathy, "After her husband's sudden renouncement of his name and their divorce, she fell ill and very nearly lost her baby."

"Baby?" Jiang Cheng repeated in surprise. Qin Su and Meng Yao had just tied the knot, and now she was already expecting?

"Yes," Madam Jin confirmed, taking a sip of her tea, "The physician was sure the baby would not survive but Qin Su pulled through with the baby."

"Ah," Jiang Cheng said, sipping his tea, mind suddenly turning to his brother.

Why did he have a feeling that his brother had a hand in it? (2)

Two days after the Lan Delegation returned from the Emergency Discussion Conference in the Unclean Realm, the guards at the entrance of the Cloud Recesses got the shock of their lives when a herd of ghostly deers appeared from the shadows. At the head of the herd was the largest stag anyone had ever seen, twice as tall as any man and with antlers as thick as tree trunks, the branches reaching high into the sky.

"Demonic deers!" one of them screeched, turning tail to run as his partner froze in shock.

"Haiyo, seriously," a voice sounded from behind the stag. "Is this what GusuLan teaches their disciples? To run away from ghost deers? Instead of exorcising them?"

The gatekeeper left behind just continued to gape when Wei Wuxian peeked out from behind the stag's bulky neck.

"Would you mind getting Lan-zongzhu?" he asked, smiling guilelessly. "I have brought a few dowry for the hand of your Second Young Master Lan."

When Lan Xichen first broke the news of Lan Wangji's secret wedding to Lan Qiren, he'd done as he'd promised himself and included his younger brother in the discussion. Sure enough, Lan Qiren descended into a shouting frenzy, which Lan Wangji bore with admirable stoicism.

A reminder of Wei Wuxian's rehabilitated reputation and new status as an ascended god helped to curb the worse of Lan Qiren's tirade. Lan Xichen had to recount everything that had happened from the start of Jin Guangyao's wedding to the disastrous Discussion Conference that ended with them visiting Diyu.

"Diyu!?" Lan Qiren swayed on his seat as if he wanted to faint. "He brought all of you to Diyu!?"

"Wanted to show us proof," Lan Wangji explained. "Otherwise, others will accuse him of being a false god."

"But... it's the underworld," Lan Qiren said, still in disbelief. "Surely, there are other ways to prove his innocence."

"Would we have believed him?" questioned Lan Xichen. "He told us about the slave camps. He told us that there were no Wen cultivators. But we didn't believe him. And now, look at what we've done. We condemned an innocent man and the Wen remnants to death."

Lan Wangji nodded in agreement. "Wei Ying wanted no more doubts cast upon him anymore."

Lan Qiren sighed in defeat.

"We are fortunate that Fuxing Zushi seeks no vengeance on all of us," Lan Xichen said.

"I suppose he seeks to restore his reputation," Lan Qiren conceded.

"Not for himself," Lan Wangji interjected, "But for Lan Yuan. So that he will not have to hide his connection to Yunmeng Jiang anymore. And that we may both proudly call him as our own."

"Wangji," Lan Qiren said, rubbing his temples and curbing his desire to ask 'Why him!?' like every other time he was reminded of his nephew's attachment to that little gremlin. But then he remembered Jin- Meng Yao, who seemed so proper and good, who he had a good impression on, but was the catalyst that almost ruined his oldest nephew. Would have ruined Xichen completely, if not for the support of Wangji and Nie Mingjue, and even Lan Yuan.

It made him question his judgement of people, especially that of Wei Wuxian, who was now Fuxing Zushi, the Yiling Laozu reborn. He was still wrapping his mind around that.

"Wangji was fated to be with Wei Wuxian," Lan Xichen said. "Still is. Uncle, we should never get in the way of Heaven's will."

Lan Qiren sighed again, having lost all steam from his previous temper tantrum.

"Fine, when Wei Ying arrives, we will receive him as befitting a married member of the Lan family."

"Wei Ying! What is this!?" exclaimed Lan Qiren when he caught sight of the ghostly deers lounging outside of Cloud Recesses, all thoughts of courtesy having fled from his mind.

"Hm? Lan-xiansheng! Good morning!" greeted Wei Wuxian cheerfully from where he was petting the alpha stag. He lifted his hand to wave at them, displaying the white ribbon of the inner clan neatly tied around his right wrist.

"What is this!?" Lan Qiren asked in utter befuddlement, gesturing to the towering deers.

"Oh this? They're ghost deers, of course," Wei Wuxian answered nonchalantly.

"But why did you bring them here?" Lan Xichen asked in bewilderment when he arrived with his brother in tow.

"You were searching for the demonic deers near Jiangling, right?" Wei Wuxian said. "I brought them here to let you know that I've claimed them as my own messengers now."

Wei Wuxian reached up to the stag and the deer lowered its majestic head to nudge at the god's hand. Abruptly, the deer lost its green glow and the dead antlers grew little buds of green and pink. Plum blossoms, similar to that of Fuxing Zushi's own hair crown.

"This way," Wei Wuxian continued, as the rest of the herd too lost their eerie hue and adopted an unearthly white glow instead. "You don't have to worry about them causing havoc to the villages."

Lan Xichen watched as one doe came over and gently nudged his hand. He reached out and patted her head, noting the coldness of her skin. One of the bud on her antlers bloomed at his touch and Lan Xichen found himself thinking the otherworldly creatures oddly beautiful.

"Lan Zhan," Wei Wuxian called out to his husband. "Meet Zhuzhu (3), he is the leader of the herd. I'm giving him to you as part of my dowry."

"What!?" Lan Qiren exclaimed in horror as Lan Wangji approached the large stag.

Lan Wangji bowed to the stag respectfully, which the ghostly creature returned. "I am honoured to make your acquaintance."

Wei Wuxian laughed in delight as the stag gently nuzzled the white clad cultivator's head in return.

"If you are in need of contacting me, Zhuzhu or his herd members will be able to reach me," Wei Wuxian said, patting Zhuzhu's flank affectionately. "They are very peaceful creatures that were just corrupted by human greed after a forest fire. I've removed their rot and gave them new... 'life', so to speak."

"Guardians. You're giving Wangji immortal deer guardians," Lan Qiren said in disbelief.

"For your front entrance and the Jingshi," confirmed Wei Wuxian with a nod.

"Do we... how do we care for a ghost deer herd?" Lan Xichen found himself asking, still stroking the doe's head. If they were to have permanent, immortal guardians courtesy of Fuxing Zushi guarding their front entrance, best to learn how to attend to them to avoid offending them.

"Oh, don't worry about them," Wei Wuxian answered with a wave of his hand. "They only consume food from the underworld. When they need to feed, they will return when they want to, if they want to. I have given them a route to the underworld, which only they can access as my animal companions."

"As far as guardians, they are very minimal maintenance," Wei Wuxian informed them. "Just don't go around insulting them, they are very intelligent and can understand human language quite well. Nor should you abuse them in anyway. Even if they forgive you for it, I might not."

He gave the gathered Lans that smile of his that showcased his teeth. It was a clear warning that they should treat his appointed messengers with due respect.

"Ravens?" Lan Wangji asked suddenly, still gently stroking Zhuzhu's great big head.

"I do have my ravens as messengers as well," Wei Wuxian answered. "I wanted to give you something that would allow you to contact me whenever needed but I didn't think my ravens would suit your *ahem* aesthetics."

Lan Xichen couldn't stop his snort of laughter, making his uncle turn to him aghast.

"Furthermore, they are very fierce fighters, if push comes to shove. Whenever you are in need, or if the Lan Sect is ever attacked again, help will be at hand," Wei Wuxian said with a wry smile that made his meaning clear.

Cloud Recesses would never burn again under Wei Wuxian's protection.

Lan Xichen nodded in understanding.

"We thank you for the generous gift," he said, ignoring his uncle's spluttering. Lan Qiren may not realise it yet but Wei Wuxian was essentially making a statement to anyone who sees the guardians that GusuLan was now under his jurisdiction and anyone who were their enemies would be his own too.

"Fuxing Zushi, please come in," Lan Xichen said, inviting the godly being into his home.

The tea that they served were of utmost quality.

Even someone like Wei Wuxian, who had eaten and drank the worst that humanity had to offer, could tell with just a sip from his cup.

There was an awkward silence in the hall, where all the elders, Lan Qiren and Lan Xichen were gathered with the couple. In actuality, the audience should only consist of the immediate inner Lan family members, which were Lan Qiren and Lan Xichen but Wei Wuxian vocally requested (insisted) that everyone important should be there too.

No one wanted to say no to a god of the underworld, so Lan Xichen asked his disciples to request the presence of the elders as well.

Wei Wuxian sighed with a smile after a sip of his tea. Beside him, Lan Wangji sat with his usual stoic expression.

When they first arrived at the hall, Lan Xichen internally debated on whether the deity, who was obviously the highest ranking in the room, should be given the presiding seat, but Wei Wuxian had grasped Lan Wangji's hand and sat down at one of the lower seats. Taking his cue and not wanting to seat higher than the chthonic god, he sat on the opposite side with his uncle while the rest of the elders sat behind them.

For some reason, despite them all being on the same level in terms of seating arrangements, Lan Xichen had an impression that the married couple was presiding judgement over all of them.

"I'm sure Lan-zongzhu has informed everyone of why I am here today," Wei Wuxian started, putting down his tea cup.

"You are here to deliver your dowry and discuss the wedding ceremony," Lan Qiren stated, having come to terms with everything after a week of contemplation. Despite his disapproval over how things had been done, it was out of his control and really, what can he do? Go against heaven's edict?

"Among other things," Wei Wuxian confirmed. "The wedding preparations are already almost complete. It will be a small wedding in Lotus Pier with only immediate family invited."

"What? That is preposterous! Lan Wangji is the Lan clan's second young master! He must have a wedding ceremony worthy of someone of his position!" exclaimed an elder, outraged at the thought that they were not invited. Furthermore, Lan Wangji was wedded to a deity! They should be making announcements of such an honour!

"Is that all he is to you? A position?" Wei Wuxian asked, smile now cool and dangerous. "I know my husband. He hates big occasions, more so if it is a private affair."

"It is true," Lan Wangji said before any other protest can be voiced. "Prefer a small wedding."

"See," said Wei Wuxian. "A private ceremony would mean more to us than a pompous, overdone show of a wedding."

"But- It'll be like you are hiding your marriage!"

"If we were, you would never know," Wei Wuxian said wryly. "We're already married for close to a year after all. You only found out because we decided not to hide anymore."

The elders seemed offended at that, despite already hearing from Lan Qiren that the two had tied the knot in secret during Lan Wangji's seclusion.

"Lan Qiren! You cannot approve of this!"

"What would the rest of the cultivation world think!?"

"Cloud Recesses should be hosting the wedding! Not Lotus Pier!"

Wei Wuxian rolled his eyes ostentatiously and Lan Xichen had the foresight to interfere with the protests from the elders before the god lost his infamous temper.

"A wedding is about the celebration of the two tied in matrimony," the young Lan Sect Leader said aloud, cutting out all the other noise. "If my brother and his spouse have decided that this is what they want, I will be glad to attend their ceremony."

Surprisingly, Lan Qiren chimed in as well, "I, too, am glad to be invited to the wedding ceremony."

"Lan Qiren!" exclaimed one of the elders but whatever he wanted to say further was cut off by Wei Wuxian.

"Right! Moving on," Wei Wuxian said dismissively, completely ignoring all protests about his wedding ceremony. "There is the topic about Lan Yuan."

"Lan-ergongzi's adopted child?" whispered one of the elders to another. "Isn't that child an illegitimate product of a non-cultivator?"

"Oh no," Wei Wuxian corrected with relish. "A-Yuan is mine. Birthed from my body and all."

Lan Wangji said nothing to dispute it even when the hall erupted into chaos. The Lan precept said not to lie but Wei Wuxian, despite his married status to Lan Wangji, was not a Lan. And it was true that Lan Yuan was as good as theirs, blood related or not.

"Pre-preposterous!"

"Impossible!"

"You are a man, are you not? A patriarch!"

"Haiyo, why is it such a surprise? I am Fuxing Mushi, after all," Wei Wuxian said, his voice changing to a slightly higher pitch even as his form melted into his more voluptuous female figure. "A mother to those in need."

At that demonstration, the elders fell silent and wide-eyed. Only a few of them had seen the example of his powers at the front entrance of Cloud Recesses but even then, none of them knew of his alternate form.

"As I was saying," Fuxing Mushi continued. "Lan Yuan is mine and Lan Zhan's. Therefore, I expect him to be treated with due respect as afforded to a inner Lan Clan heir."

"Lord Wei," Lan Qiren said, clearly trying to appear polite and deferent to the deity, who made a face at the title. Lan Xichen had to stop himself from smiling, remembering what Wei Wuxian had once said.

"Lan Yuan's name is already listed in the inner clan registry," Lan Qiren continued, doing an admirable job ignoring the look Wei Wuxian gave him.

"Is that so?" Wei Wuxian said slowly, tapping a finger on his lip as he changed back to his male form. "And yet, I see no difference in the way he is treated from the other non-Lan orphans."

"What do you mean?" Lan Xichen asked, form going completely ramrod straight. He was notorious for coddling his little nephew, though the child never acted spoiled or entitled. He would not tolerate having A-Yuan, or any child for that matter, be treated terribly.

"What do I mean, indeed," Wei Wuxian said slowly, eyes on some of the elders who were exchanging wary looks. This made Lan Xichen's internal alarm sound as he stared between the deity and the elders he was staring at. Lan Wangji and his uncle was doing the same, wondering if Wei Wuxian had witnessed something.

"Lan Zhan's 33 strikes is one thing. It is his punishment for injuring the elders when protecting me, I understand that," Wei Wuxian said with a nod. "He paid for his mistake-"

"It wasn't a mistake," Lan Wangji interrupted. "Will always protect Wei Ying."

"Lan Zhan," Wei Wuxian said with a sad, gentle smile. "You are too good to me. The right thing to do at that time, would have been to let them arrest me considering what I did at Buyetian."

"No," Lan Wangji said firmly.

"Either way, the result would have still been the same," Wei Wuxian told him truthfully, reaching out to hold his hand, regardless of their audience.

"Wei Ying," Lan Wangji said softly.

"I don't mean to intrude," Lan Xichen said, after a moment. "But what did you mean by saying what you did about Lan Yuan's treatment?"

"Ah yes. Thank you, brother-in-law. For reminding me," Wei Wuxian said, going back to his previous topic. "I understand why Lan Zhan was punished, though I do not agree to it at all."

Here, he gave them all a stern look that conveyed his disapproval over their corporal punishments. Lan Xichen had a weird feeling that the punishment whip would not be in use for a long time, if ever again as long as Wei Wuxian had his eye on the GusuLan residents.

"What I don't understand, however, is why a sect that puts so much emphasis on rules and regulations around conduct allows their elders to talk badly about a child, badmouth Hanguang-jun behind his back and question his leader because of his youth instead of supporting him by giving solid advices," Wei Wuxian continued, turning to stare pointedly at the elders.

Said elders swallowed and some exchanged looks, clearly caught.

Lan Qiren's face was thunderous as he turned to glare at the elders, though he continued to remain silent. Listening.

"Just because some of the children can't talk yet doesn't mean that they can't hear you or understand the words that are coming out of your mouth, Elder Yang," Wei Wuxian said, eyes going directly to said elder. "Worse still if you say things in front of my A-Yuan. He's very chatty with me, you know. He tells me a lot of things that are going on around in Cloud Recesses. Even things that the Lan Sect Leader might not know."

"Like what?" Lan Xichen asked, incredulous.

"Oh, like how Elder Ming likes to call A-Yuan a bastard behind his back," Wei Wuxian listed, nonchalantly throwing said elder under the proverbial bus. "Or that Elder Sun sniffs at the orphans from that the Lan clan accepted after the Sunshot Campaign, thinking that they will never amount to anything except as mere disciples to make up the numbers in the clan."

Lan Qiren was genuinely speechless as he gaped, first at Wei Wuxian, then at the elders. He looked absolutely incensed.

"Of course, everyone is entitled to their own opinion," Wei Wuxian said, hand still holding Lan Wangji's. Lan Xichen had the impression that it was to stop his brother from doing anything hasty. "But I would like that to remain in their own minds and not verbalised in front of impressionable children."

Wei Wuxian gave them all that warning smile of his, one hand now on his cheek.

"I frankly don't care what people say about me," he said, eyes crinkling in fake bemusement. "But when it comes to my husband and my son, I will give **absolutely** no leeway to anyone who badmouths them, especially in their presence."

Lan Qiren felt a shiver go down his spine as the temperature in the hall seemed to drop and mist gathered at their feet. He fancied that he could see frost gathering at the rim of his teacup.

"Un-Understood," Lan Qiren forced himself to say. "I will see to it that severe punishments are dealt to those who are guilty of slander and gossip."

"Oh good," Wei Wuxian said, letting go of Lan Wangji's hand to clap his hands. "I will leave the discipline to Lan-xiansheng. After all, it is written in the Lan precepts."

At the reminder of how they had failed to uphold their own rules and regulations, the elders seemed to wilt in shame.

"Furthermore, it is not like they can escape punishment in Diyu, right?" Wei Wuxian continued blithely. "Lan-zongzhu himself have seen the Gate to the Tongue-Ripping Hall. You know, for liars, gossipers and slanderers."

His smile was positively frigid as he directed the words at the pale looking elders.

Lan Qiren didn't blame them for looking so fearful, even he was feeling faint from the reminder that Wei Wuxian would be one of the judges of the underworld that they would one day inevitably meet after death.

After a moment, Wei Wuxian continued. "Now then, on to the next topic. The dowry and the bride...uhm... groom price."

"Yes," Lan Xichen said, glad to be able to breathe again. For a moment there, it felt as if all the air had been sucked out of his lungs.

"The first dowry I brought is the immortal guardians for the front entrance of Cloud Recesses in the Jingshi," Wei Wuxian said. "The second is the elimination of the water-born abyss in Caiyi Town."

"The abyss?" Lan Xichen repeated. The lake in Caiyi Town had been drained for the last few years since they discovered the abyss during Wei Wuxian's guest disciple days, but the infestation had yet to shrink to a manageable level yet. (4)

"I've already purified the abyss," Wei Wuxian informed them. "Caiyi Town can refill the lake so the fishes can return and the fishermen can go back to their trade."

Lan Xichen exchanged looks with his uncle, understanding now that Wei Wuxian did not come bearing any material items but rather, good will to the Lan clan, as long as the same respect was afforded to him, his husband and child.

"We thank you for your assistance in purifying Biling Lake," said Lan Xichen, bowing to the deity. Lan Qiren did the same.

"As for the third dowry," Wei Wuxian took out a scroll and handed it to a disciple to be brought over to the Lan Sect Leader.

Lan Xichen opened it and discovered it to be a large and elaborate protection array.

"This is...?" he asked, looking up to his new brother-in-law.

"It is the Azure Dragon Protection Seal," Wei Wuxian said. "I designed it to be set on the perimeters of Cloud Recesses. If any covert attacks are launched within the grounds, the array will close off all access to Cloud Recesses and eject all those with ill-intentions out of the barrier."

"And the attackers will be besieged by my animal companions and I will be notified immediately," Wei Wuxian continued. "Of course, that's not all the seal does but let's hope that it never goes to the level that the namesake will ever be summoned."

Lan Xichen's eyes widened as the words registered. Summoned? The Azure Dragon???

"I have an agreement with an Azure Dragon that will assist if need be but I would rather not trouble a celestial beast unless it is a severe emergency. I will, of course, be the one who will set the array in place," the deity said in a matter of fact manner. "Since it would require a large amount of qi and the knowledge to connect the array to heaven and earth to power the array indefinitely."

Lan Xichen just nodded woodenly, feeling once again like he was out of his depth when it came to his new in-law.

"Don't get me wrong," Wei Wuxian said, looking as if he didn't drop an announcement bomb on them. "I didn't design this for anything other than to protect my husband and son, more than anyone else in GusuLan."

"Bride price," Lan Wangji said suddenly, eyes never leaving his husband's face as if they were the only ones in the hall. "A temple in Caiyi Town for Wei Ying and one in the mountains, close to Cloud Recesses."

"Wangji," Lan Qiren said, though he did not sound annoyed as much as exasperated... and exhausted.

"I like that idea," Wei Wuxian said with a bright smile. "Better than paper money, no offense brother-in-law."

"None taken," replied Lan Xichen without thinking. Instead, he was focused on the thought of a temple in Caiyi Town. Would that be under Fuxing Zushi, Yiling Laozu or Fuxing Mushi?

Lan Qiren was visibly rubbing his temples now, but he asked anyway, "Is that all? Just two temples? Trade agreement? Lands?"

"Why would I need any of that? I'm already dead," Wei Wuxian asked back in bewilderment. "I have my own realm. I can manifest whatever I want there."

"Not even with Yunmeng Jiang?" Lan Xichen tried. "It does not seem fair compared to the dowry."

Wei Wuxian opened his mouth, then closed it before saying in contemplation, "Well, Yunmeng Jiang would like to establish a silk trade route for the merchants all the way to Suzhou. Yes, that would be a good idea. But you would have to discuss the details of this one with Jiang Cheng."

Lan Xichen nodded. "I will establish contact with Sect Leader Jiang for the terms and conditions."

"Good, now that it's settled, one last gift," Wei Wuxian said, taking out a box... from somewhere.

"And here is my gift to my dear husband," the deity said with a relish, putting a beautifully carved box made of sandalwood in front of Lan Wangji.

"Wei Ying?" Lan Wangji asked. He thought that they were done with the dowry?

"Open it!" Wei Wuxian encouraged and Lan Wangji did as he was told, trusting Wei Ying to know what he was doing.

Inside was a single peach, pale golden and fragrant. It was twice as large as Lan Wangji's fist and perfectly shaped with no blemishes whatsoever. The fragrance of the peach filled the hall and the elders had to crane their heads to look at the offering.

"This," Lan Wangji had a suspicion tingling at the back of his mind as to what this was as he continued to stare at it. "Wei Ying..."

"Yup," Wei Ying said, grinning at him. "The Great Goddess Xiwangmu kindly gave me one of her peaches of immortality as our wedding present. Since I don't need it, Lan Zhan gets to have it all to himself, of course."

The elders gathered erupted into a whispering frenzy, awe and envy colouring their voices. Lan Qiren's eyes couldn't have gotten any larger as he stared at the golden peach in disbelief. Lan Xichen, too, was wide eyed but he was biting his lip to keep from smiling too wide.

But Lan Wangji didn't care. Nor did he care for the precious, priceless treasure that laid before him. All he cared for was Wei Ying, who smiled brightly at him.

An eternity.

With his Wei Ying.

That was all he could ever ask for.

*

*

End Chapter 18

Chapter End Notes

(1) Mostly this fic stuck to the novel/donghua but I love Mianmian in the Untamed too much not to include her somewhere in my fic. That woman is the only person I can ever respect in the Jin clan.

(2) WY did mention that SS's lifeline had been cut to give chance to another. Poor QS would have lost baby Qin Song from the stress without his interference. Yes, A-Song was always going to die young but no, WY is a bleeding heart.

(3) Zhǔ 麋 for stag. So, basically, WY is calling the alpha deer; Stagstag. lol.

(4) In the novel/donghua, the abyss was only temporarily sealed so that the lake could be drained and the abyss cut off from potential feeding source (aka human lives) before they could destroy it permanently. Canonically, after WY returned 13/16 years later, he mentioned about it being manageable enough to eliminate.

One might think that enlisting a celestial dragon to protect a sect is overkill but WWX has lost way too many people to take another chance. Of course, if Lan Zhan and Lan Yuan dies, they would go to the underworld and be reunited with him but what if their souls were lost on the journey there? Nope. A-Yuan is going to have a long and fulfilling life as far as WWX is concerned.

Just in case anyone is wondering, no, Cloud Recesses isn't the only place that is armoured to the teeth now. Lotus Pier has guardians of their own too, though they are mostly unseen... underwater. Drowning is arguably worse than being gored to death by ghostly deers, no?

Celestial Union

Chapter Summary

The day of the wedding was blessed with clear sky and Lan Qiren was not entirely certain if Wei Wuxian had anything to do with it. It wasn't that he was being a suspicious cynic but the moment the Gusu contingent arrived at Lotus Pier, everyone could see clear signs of Wei Wuxian's interference.

Chapter Notes

For the longest time, the wedding was not coming to me so I had the hardest time writing this chapter. If it is brief and perfunctory, it's because it is. They are already married in the eyes of heaven, this is just formality in the eyes of their families.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

From the moment the Gusu cultivators arrived at the Yunmeng border, something started following their boats from under the water. Their disciples excitedly whispered amongst themselves when they caught glimpses of sparkling iridescent scales and fins emerging from the waves.

Upon docking, the creatures that followed them peaked out from the water to watch them with curious, large eyes.

"Jiaoren(1)!" one disciple spluttered and was hushed by Lan Xichen with a look.

"Do not be impolite," the Lan Sect Leader warned before nodding politely at the mermaids that were still watching them from beneath the docks.

"Sirs, is this your first time visiting Yunmeng?" asked the boatman who ferried them. "They are the guardians of Lotus Pier, tasked by Fuxing Zushi to protect his worshippers."

"Guardians," Lan Xichen repeated. Why was he surprised that Wuxian would set fierce guardians for the place that he once called home?

"Yes, Sect Leader Jiang said that they were a pod looking for a home to settle and so, Fuxing Zushi made a deal with them. A safe home in the waters of Lotus Pier in return for their protection," the boatman answered. Then the man sighed.

"It was a little intimidating at first but they help the fishermen by herding the fish into the nets," the boatman continued. "And one of them saved Xiao Jiu two days ago from drowning so I suppose they really are a blessing."

"Is it true that they weave silks as strong as demon spider webs and it shines like the sparkling reflection of water?" enquired a disciple, clearly unable to quell his curiosity.

"I don't know," The boatman shrugged. "I have never spoken to them before. Perhaps you can ask them yourself."

The disciple balked and the boatman guffawed heartily.

"They keep to themselves mostly," the boatman said. "They seldom venture out of Yunmeng but watches the boats for any hostile intruders. Lord Wei tasked them to protect Lotus Pier and Yunmeng, so they take threats seriously. It's been nearly half a year and no one has lodge any complaints yet. I suppose no one wants another invasion to happen so any added protection is better than nothing."

After what happened to Cloud Recesses before the start of the Sunshot Campaign, Lan Xichen could empathise with that sentiment.

"Thank you for your services," Lan Xichen said as the second boat bearing his brother, uncle and the other disciples docked as well. He paid both the boatmen and they made their way through Lotus Pier.

Lotus Pier was lively with chatter as vendors and civilians wandered around in their daily life. The Lans received a few glances though no one approached them. Lan Xichen spied at least two new looking shrines painted red and black as they made their way through the crowd towards Lotus Cove.

Sect Leader Jiang was waiting for them at the front gates, evidently having been informed of their arrival at the docks.

"Jiujiu!" little A-Yuan called out, running forward to grab Jiang Wanyin's leg in a hug. Lan Xichen opened his mouth to call his nephew back but Jiang Wanyin just reached down and carried the little boy into his arms.

"A-Yuan," Jiang Wanyin greeted. "Sect Leader Lan, Lan-Xiansheng, Hanguang-jun."

"Sect Leader Jiang," Lan Xichen greeted along with his kin, quelling his instincts to retrieve his nephew. He suppose he would have to share the title of uncle with Jiang Wanyin now.

"Where is Ling-didi, Jiujiu?" demanded his nephew imperviously.

"Little brat, is that how you talk to your uncle," Jiang Wanyin said, though his words were lacking any of the hostility that Lan Xichen was used to hearing from him.

"No, Jiujiu," A-Yuan said quickly, wrapping his arms around the purple-clad shoulders of the sect leader. "A-Yuan miss Ling-didi. A-Yuan miss Jiujiu."

Jiang Wanyin harrumphed, though there was a softness in his expression that even A-Yuan could pick up as the little boy beamed up toothily at the sect leader. He gestured for them to follow him into Lotus Cove.

"A-Ling is napping," Jiang Wanyin told A-Yuan. "When he wakes up, you can play with your cousin."

"Okay," A-Yuan replied obediently, looking entirely too comfortable in the Jiang Sect Leader's arms. As far as Lan Xichen knew, this was their first physical meeting, so it was a little disconcerting to see them so easy together.

"Where is Youn- Wuxian?" asked Lan Xichen instead.

"My brother was pulled back to Diyu before you arrived," Jiang Wanyin answered. "He said he'll make it in time for the ceremony."

Normally, Lan Qiren would comment on the rudeness of the bride(groom) for being absent so close to the wedding ceremony but he found himself unable to disparage Wei Wuxian for his sense of responsibility in performing his role as a God of the Underworld. There were some things that even a wedding had to take a backseat and the balance of life and death was undoubtedly more important.

"It must be urgent for him to be pulled away so pressingly," Lan Xichen said, voicing out Lan Qiren's thoughts.

"Must be," Jiang Wanyin agreed. "My brother did not consult me with the issue. Nor do I think I would want to know the issues that arises in the land of the dead."

Wise that, Lan Qiren decided. Some things were beyond the grasp of living men and better left to the judgement of more abled individuals.

"Jiujiu, fish," A-Yuan suddenly interrupted, pulling their attention to a lotus pond nearby.

A jiaoren was looking in, head and shoulders above the waters as he waited for the sect leader to notice him. His unbound dark hair floated freely behind him. This was the first time Lan Xichen had a good look at a jiaoren and as he inspected the creature, Jiang Wanyin stood up to approach the jiaoren with Lan Yuan still in his arms.

"That's not a fish, A-Yuan. It's impolite to call a jiaoren fish," Jiang Wanyin corrected. "This is Pod Leader Sui."

"Ah, Sect Leader Jiang-," Lan Xichen started but was too late as Jiang Wanyin bowed to the jiaoren who swam closer to speak to the sect leader.

"Sect Leader Jiang. Well met, little Lan Yuan, son of Fuxing Mushi and Hanguang-jun," the jiaoren said with a musical lilt in his voice.

Lan Xichen heard that mermaids could sing so well that they could compel any creature to do their bidding though he had never heard any jiaoren sing before (or met any until that day). Furthermore, he read that they were vicious fighters when faced with hostile attacks against their pods and homes.

Truth be told, if the rumours were true, then Lotus Pier was indeed protected by the most formidable guardians. Thinking on it, Lan Xichen would not be surprised if Lotus Pier was also protected by a similar seal that Wei Wuxian had bestowed on Gusulan.

"Pod Leader Sui," Sect Leader Jiang returned amiably, adjusting his grip on a wide-eyed Lan Yuan. "How may I help you?"

"In view of the wedding celebration, we come bearing gifts for Lord Wei's young one and husband," Pod Leader Sui said and as he finished his words, three other heads popped up from the water.

Two of the jiaoren was carrying a large waterproof chest and they hoisted it easily out of the water onto the ground at Sect Leader Jiang's feet while the third passed a smaller chest to one of Jiang Wanyin's disciples.

Jiang Wanyin obligingly opened the large chest, revealing bolts of iridescent white silk made by the finest Jiaoren weavers.

"It is in thanks to Lord Wei for his help and for Sect Leader Jiang's willingness to allow us to build our nest deep in Lotus Pier," Pod Leader Sui said, before he too wielded a small box up for Jiang Wanyin to take.

"Thank you for your gifts," Jiang Wanyin replied. "Please do not hesitate to inform me should there be any issue with your new nest."

"We will," Pod Leader Sui said, straightforward and lacking of the tedious court manners that most Sect Leaders were used to. Jiaoren operated differently than humankind. They valued directness rather than subtlety and courtly politeness.

Frankly, Jiang Cheng found himself liking the bluntness that jiaoren displayed in their interactions, stripped of any falseness that was common amidst the humankind in guise of being diplomatic. Jiang Cheng thought that many people could do with a lot less pomp and more honesty. It would certainly make things easier to understand.

It was with this in mind that Wei Wuxian has approached the wandering pod, offering them a safe home where they would not be hunted and captured for their silk, scales and pearls in return for protecting Lotus Pier's water. Jiaoren magic was nothing to scoff at and trade with the jiaoren would benefit both sides.

Of course, with the added promise of protection from a deity, the pod leader had agreed. It would be foolish indeed for anyone to incur the wrath of a god of the underworld by

poaching mermaids in YunmengJiang.

Jiang Cheng opened the little box in his hand to discover large pearls the size of his thumb. What he would do with them was anyone's guess but it was a gift fit for an emperor.

"These are generous gifts," Jiang Cheng said to the leader of the pod, bowing in gratitude, which the jiaoren returned before promptly disappearing back into the water.

Like he said, no unnecessary political soliciting.

"Marbles," A-Yuan said, reaching out for the item in his hand and Jiang Cheng readily gave him the box of pearls to play with.

"Don't put them in your mouth," Jiang Wanyin said, as if he hadn't just given a child a box full of untold riches as toys.

Lan Wangji was handed the other small chest which he opened to reveal pristine white ribbons threaded with tiny white pearls at the ends. He picked them up and felt the hum of protective spells woven into them. It would make the wearer immune to enchantments from other spiritual creatures, especially those that relied on allurements to capture their prey. The Second Jade of Lan made a mental note to ask the head seamstress back in Gusu to embroider the cloud patterns onto the ribbons for his son's coming-of-age ceremony.

"This is a lavish gift," Lan Xichen commented, inspecting the bolts of silk in the large chest. Whether they really were stronger than any known silk, he did not know, but even to the untrained eyes, he could tell that they were of very high quality. Very seldom does Jiaoren share their workmanship with humans and even if they did, their craft would sell at a price that would bankrupt a sect.

"Mn, made for A-Yuan," Lan Wangji said, closing the box of ribbons. His son would have nothing but the best now, if Wei Ying and he had any say in it.

Jiang Wanyin just nodded in agreement, patting Lan Yuan on the back as the little boy lifted a pearl up into the sky to peer at it curiously.

"My servants will show you to your rooms," Jiang Wanyin said to his Lan guests, putting his nephew down. "Lan Wangji, A-Yuan, come with me."

Lan Wangji wordlessly followed, A-Yuan's hand now in his. Jiang Wanyin led him to another direction, through corridors and walkways built over interconnected lotus ponds. When he opened the door to a moderate looking room, Lan Wangji immediately knew that this room used to belong to Wei Ying.

"I kept everything as it was," Jiang Wanyin said. "My brother never sleeps here even when he comes for visits so I thought you'd prefer to have this room for the duration of your stay. I had a cot brought in for A-Yuan too."

"Mn, my thanks to Sect Leader Jiang," Lan Wangji said with a polite bow. Jiang Wanyin rolled his eyes.

"Don't be so polite. It gives me goosebumps," the man said. "You're my brother-in-law. You can call me Jiang Cheng."

Lan Wangji nodded though he said nothing in agreement. Jiang Cheng left it be, knowing that Lan Wangji would only deem to call Wei Ying by his given name.

"A-Yuan, Jiujiu is going to teach you how to swim," he told the little boy who jumped and nodded, hand still grasping the box of pearls that his Jiujiu had allowed him to take.

"Swim with fishies!" A-Yuan said.

"Don't call them fish, A-Yuan," Lan Wangji said before Jiang Cheng could remind the little boy. "It's rude."

"Yes, diedie," A-Yuan conceded.

"The jiaoren are kind when unprovoked," Jiang Cheng said. "They will watch you while you learn so you don't drown."

"Be kind to them and they will be kind to you," Lan Wangji reminded and A-Yuan nodded, head flopping up and down enthusiastically.

"There will be a festival during the night of the wedding," Jiang Cheng said, "I'll take A-Yuan and A-Ling to visit the market. Then they can bunk down together in the same bed."

Lan Wangji nodded in thanks. "Xiangzhang will also want to come along."

"Of course," Jiang Cheng said, valiantly trying to keep the sarcasm from colouring his words. Lan Xichen already had A-Yuan most of the time at Cloud Recesses, couldn't he let Jiang Cheng monopolise the boy's time for one night! He was his uncle too!

That man better get used to seeing Jiang Cheng's face from now on. 'Cause he was not going to let his brother's son grow up without a little Jiang influence.

Jiang Cheng wondered briefly if he could persuade Lan Wangji to allow him to gift Lan Yuan his sword during his coming-of-age. Something purple and white with red precious stones to celebrate his duality as both the son of a god and a mortal as well as the child of two sects.

His contemplation was interrupted by a tug on his robes.

"Ling-didi?" A-Yuan asked, blinking guilelessly up at his uncle.

"When he wakes up, I'll bring him over so you two can play," Jiang Cheng promised. "For now, you rest."

With that, the Jiang Sect Leader exchange a nod with Lan Wangji and left.

The day of the wedding was blessed with clear sky and Lan Qiren was not entirely certain if Wei Wuxian had anything to do with it. It wasn't that he was being a suspicious cynic but the moment the Gusu contingent arrived at Lotus Pier, everyone could see clear signs of Wei Wuxian's interference. The mermaids, for one, was the most glaring one. Another sign was the large lotuses around Lotus Cove. There was no way lotuses could grow large enough to be stood upon! Some of the Jiang disciples even meditated on them!

"I don't know if my brother did anything to them but ever since his first visit, they've grown bigger and bigger," Jiang Wanyin admitted with a shrug. "The pods too. The seeds are normal though. Just slightly larger."

"Is all of Yunmeng affected?" Lan Xichen asked curiously, inspecting one large purple blossom sprouting from a pot. Every part of the lotuses were commonly eaten to improve health so this effect made Lan Xichen wonder if their medicinal properties would be affected as well. Or even boosted.

"No, there's been no report about this happening elsewhere," Jiang Wanyin said. Then he turned to Wen Ning who was staring at his sister's plaque. "What about Blossom Mountain? Are the flowers there different than normal too?"

Wen Ning thought about it before nodding. "Slightly larger than normal though not as much as the lotuses in Lotus Cove."

"I knew it," Jiang Wanyin grumbled. "My brother is playing a joke on me."

Wen Ning laughed awkwardly, not wanting to admit that it was probably true.

"Xichen, it's time," Lan Qiren said, bringing back the group from their conversation as they waited at the ancestral hall.

Lan Wangji and A-Yuan arrived at the hall hand-in-hand just then, both dressed in handsome brocade robes of red and forehead ribbons of the same colour.

"Where is Wei Wuxian?" Lan Qiren asked Wen Ning, who opened his mouth to answer only to be interrupted.

"I'm here! I'm here!"

Wei Wuxian, dressed in his formal black and red robes, melted from the shadows looking contrite. His hair was up neatly at least, though he had traded his raven skull quan for one of a nine-petalled lotus(2) made of silver and lined with tiny red rubies.

"You're late! To your own wedding," sniped Jiang Wanyin automatically, though technically, Wei Wuxian was on time.

"Not true," Wei Wuxian contradicted. "I'm right on time."

"A-Niang!"

Wei Wuxian grabbed the shooting star barreling into him with barely a pause.

"A-Yuan, you look so handsome! Almost as handsome as your diedie," Wei Wuxian exclaimed with delight.

"Wei Wuxian, enough dallying," Jiang Cheng said, gesturing to the altar. "It's time for the ceremony! You're going to miss the auspicious hour!"

"Oh right. A-Yuan, go to Bobo," Wei Wuxian said, putting his son down before straightening his robes. When he touched the lapels of his robes, the black bled to crimson red. By the time he stepped up beside Hanguang-jun, his red robes were a match for his significant other's.

Wei Wuxian smiled widely at his husband, who returned the gesture with a soft, small one of his own.

"Huh, didn't know the ice statue could smile," he could hear Jiang Cheng mumble to himself.

If Wei Wuxian was any less enamored with his soulmate, he would have turned around to glare at his brother. As it was, he was too busy staring into the eyes of the man he would spend eternity with.

In fact, he was so enthralled with his husband's beauty that he barely paid any attention to the ceremony, just following his Lan Zhan's cue. It was over soon enough and they went on to perform the tea ceremony.

The rest of the ceremony went on without a hitch as well, which made Jiang Cheng sigh a breath of relief. Given the history of fuck-ups happening around Wei Wuxian, he had half expected something to occur that would derail the wedding.

Fortunately for his blood pressure, the gods above must have heard his prayers the night before and prevented anything calamitous from happening.

Just like the ceremony, the reception dinner was a private family affair held in the dining pavilion. However, the rest of the sect disciples were given an extravagant dinner in the communal dining hall. Jiang Cheng found out that the Lans had a similar dinner celebration

back in Gusu to celebrate the marriage of their Second Jade of Lan, despite the lack of bride, groom and the inner family members.

The wedding ceremony was not a secret. It just wasn't overblown like most weddings tying two sects together would be. Case in point, Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan's wedding. But, of course, that was also because it involved LanlingJin and their heir, so perhaps that was an exaggerated example.

The elders of the Jiangs and Lans wanted a large celebration for the union between a god and a mortal, but everyone involved mutually came to an understanding that no one could make Wei Wuxian or Lan Wangji, the two most stubborn men in their generation, do anything they didn't want to.

For their part, this was just a formality because as far as they were concerned, they were married in the eyes of heaven.

But with this acknowledgement, at least Lan Yuan would be 'legitimised' in the eyes of GusuLan, safely putting him within the inner family clan. Lan Xichen even pointedly acknowledged Lan Yuan as his nephew and named him his heir apparent, since everyone knew by now that Lan Wangji would not be taking the mantle of Lan Sect Leader.

Given what had happened during the 'marriage negotiation', none of the elders dared to display any offense or even utter a word of disapproval towards their sect leader's announcement.

After the punishment Lan Qiren had dolled on them, which involved copying conduct, cleaning a suitable part of the forest behind the jingshi for the new spirit guardians of Cloud Recesses and personally apologising and obtaining forgiveness from any parties that they had knowingly or unknowingly offended (all in all, a humbling exercise to be sure), the elders seemed to have adopted a rather chastened outlook as a whole.

As for YunmengJiang, the common folk celebrated the union the same way they had been celebrating their patron god for the last few years.

Wei Wuxian had been their own for the longest time and even death had not prevented the young man that many at Lotus Pier adored from protecting them. So it was not surprising that word went out to the public that the Venerable Patriarch of Renewal had found union with the future God of Light and Hope.

It was a wedding celebration in Yunmeng that would become an annual festival in the years to come and though Hanguang-jun hadn't officially taken the post as of yet, the rumours of the existence of such a god only solidified Lan Wangji's position amidst heaven.

By the time Lan Yuan became Lan Sizhui, Hanguang-jun would have established a reputation as an immortal cultivator who chased after chaos. He would become the beacon of hope for

the common people who knew of pain and suffering under the oppression of evil. He was their sun who lit up the dark world and his protection was as encompassing as the sky.

By the time Lan Sizhui became the new Lan Sect Leader, Lan Wangji would already have temples built in his name, worshipped as the God of Justice and Hope.

After his ascension, the temple for Fuxing Zushi in Cloud Recesses would also become his as GusuLan settled a statue of his likeness beside Wei Wuxian's, robes of white and blue in contrast to Fuxing Zushi's black and red.

The God of the Sun and Sky with the God of the Moon and Stars.

Their combined temples would be renamed and become known as the Temples of Celestial Union.

*

*

For now, their wedding night was celebrated with Wei Wuxian handfeeding his official husband slices of the Peach of Immortality, each bite ensuring their future together.

*

*

End Of Destruction and Rebirth

Extra Scenes

Jiang Wanyin lived to a ripe old age.

Old enough to see Jin Rulan get married, have children and become a grandfather.

Old enough to see his nephew, the famed Lan Sizhui become the next Lan Sect Leader and a legend in his own right.

And old enough to see his own child become the next sect leader of Yunmeng Jiang.

Retirement, he discovered, was boring. There was hardly anything he was interested in as a hobby and he'd spent a majority of his life doing nothing but taking care of Yunmeng and its people.

But he had given the reigns to his adopted daughter and was adamant on not being the hovering retired sect leader that made things worse. Of course, he offered advice when asked but that was the extent of his meddling. He knew how difficult and stressful it was being a sect leader without having elders give unsolicited advice and opinions at every turn.

With nothing much to do, he spent most of his days strolling around Lotus Pier, talking to the locals and visiting his nephews and their children.

It really didn't surprise anyone that Sandu Shengshou Jiang Wanyin passed away peacefully in his sleep one night, a few months after his retirement.

His life had been filled with strife, losing his whole family to the war and having found no one compatible to spend it with. Everything he did revolved mainly in the interest of Yunmeng and so, without a purpose in life, he'd drifted off into the afterlife, assured that he had left behind a strong and enduring legacy.

All of Yunmeng mourned him, his adopted daughter, niece and nephews especially. He was a strict taskmaster but he was also a doting uncle and father figure, as well as a fierce protector and a formidable sect leader. Yunmeng had been in his care for decades and had thrived for it.

His funeral lasted for days and the mourning period was observed strictly by his successor and his remaining family members.

It was a sad time for the family but at the same time, they knew that he was where he wanted to be.

Jiang Wanyin was finally reunited with his siblings.

Wei Wuxian personally came to fetch him to the underworld.

"About time," Jiang Cheng grumbled, getting up from his bed. It was odd. He never thought that being dead would feel so... freeing.

The aches and pains that he'd accumulated through his years of living and a burden on his shoulders that he had never noticed seemed to have disappeared. As if him leaving behind his body let him leave all his troubles behind as well.

"Haiya, Jiang Cheng," his brother rolled his eyes in exasperation. "Who complains about wanting to go to Diyu?"

"You didn't come to visit for so long, I thought you and A-Jie forgot about me!" he continued complaining as he walked towards his brother. With each step he took, he began shedding the layers of years he had lived. By the time he was by his brother's side, he was a young man again, in his twenties and ready to fight another war.

"Sorry," Wei Wuxian apologised. "I had some things to attend to that took longer than I expected. You know how it is. Time flows-"

"-differently in Diyu," Jiang Cheng finished. "Yeah, yeah, I know."

"Let's go?" Wei Wuxian asked and Jiang Cheng nodded.

It was when they arrived at Diyu that Wei Wuxian dropped the bomb.

"What do you mean you are not reincarnating!?"

Jiang Yanli smiled serenely at the face of her younger brother's shocked exclaim.

"I was given a post by the Great Goddess Xiwangmu to become a Goddess Mother of Hearth and Home," Jiang Yanli explained.

"Usually, assistants to gods arise to ascension when they start being worshipped and a vacuum of power is needed to be filled," Wei Wuxian said. "Jiejie is being offered the position because Xiwangmu thinks she will be the perfect fit."

"She would," Jiang Cheng replied vehemently and truthfully. "But what about me!?"

"Well, the original positions that Lan Zhan and I were supposed to fill as Guardians of Central Heavens are still open," Wei Wuxian explained. "They enquired me to ask if you and another would be willing to train for those positions."

"Train? How long does that take? Who is training me?" Jiang Cheng asked.

"A couple of decades. General Nan Yang, probably," Wei Wuxian answered. "Originally, I was going to offer the place as one of my assistant to you since Jiejie is leaving for her new post soon. But Dianxia asked if you would be a good candidate and I said 'yes!' so..."

"I'll take it!" Jiang Cheng said immediately. Like hell he would say no. His sister wasn't reincarnating. His brother wasn't reincarnating. If everybody was in heaven (or hell, in his brother's case), there was no way he was going into the reincarnation cycle! He'd crawl his way back out if he had to!

"Oh great! I'll talk to Dianxia about it," Wei Wuxian said, clapping his hands. "Though you'd probably still be stuck as my assistant for a couple of years, if not decades, before the administrative paperwork goes through. Seriously, Ling Wen is so overworked, I think there's a millennia's worth of backlog waiting whenever she so much as take a breather."

"Okay, I can work with that," Jiang Cheng said. It was not as if he aged here anyway. "So, who is my partner?"

Jiang Yanli and Wei Wuxian simultaneously pointed to his left.

Jiang Cheng turned and groaned, shoulders slumping in abject disappointment and disgust.

"Hey!" exclaimed Jin Zixuan, who was standing to his left, obviously offended by the response.

"A-Jie, Whyyyyy?" Jiang Cheng lamented.

Half-heartedly.

It was still good to be with his siblings.

Even if he had to stomach his brother-in-law now.

Ugh. Actually, he had two brother-in-laws to stomach.

For eternity.

*****Deleted Scene from Chapter 14*****

"You are Fuxing Mushi," Lan Xichen whispered. "A-Yuan's mother."

"That's right," Wei Wuxian confirmed recklessly and Jiang Cheng facepalmed.

"A-Yuan is very important you know," Wei Wuxian said. "I'm so glad that the Lan Clan acknowledges him and treats him so well."

The way he delivered those lines gave Lan Xichen a feeling that if his child had been treated less than stellar, the Lan Clan would be seeing a lot of collateral damage from the wrath of a god.

"I actually asked Dianxia and his husband to become A-Yuan's god parents you know," Wei Wuxian said to Jiang Cheng and Lan Wangji. "They agreed."

"You... asked the Emperor of Heaven to become your son's god parents," Jiang Cheng said.

"Yes, the Emperor of Heaven and the King of Ghosts," Wei Wuxian said with a cheery nod.

Lan Xichen feels faint again.

"Why not me?" Jiang Cheng questioned.

"What? You are A-Yuan's jiujiu. That's different," Wei Wuxian said.

"Why though?" Jiang Cheng asked with a confused look. "I mean, they're not in the mortal world most of the time."

"Oh, I'm a parent. I'm paranoid that my child will be bullied. Of course I want A-Yuan to have the best of the best," Wei Wuxian said. Then, a frozen smile appeared on his face, "Also, Siming(3) told me that A-Yuan is destined to be great but refuses to tell me the details and now I'm paranoid that meant A-Yuan will suffer like I did. So I'm preparing for all contingencies."

Jiang Wanyin's eyebrows lifted high on his forehead as Lan Wangji nodded approvingly.

"Good thinking, Wei Ying," Lan Wangji said.

*****End Deleted Scene*****

Chapter End Notes

(1) It's coincidentally May, so Mermaids is a must. lol. It was this or Lotus Spirits but to be honest, it's probably not a surprise if WWX recruited both to protect Yunmeng and his brother. Hence, the enlarged lotuses floating around Lotus Cove.

(2) Lotuses are also signs of reincarnation and rebirth.

(3) Siming (Chinese: 司命; pinyin: Sīmìng) refers to a Chinese deity title who makes fine adjustments to human fate, with various English translations (such as, the Master of Fate, Controller of Fate, Deified Judge of Life, Arbiter of Fate, Director of Allotted Life Spans, and Director of Destinies)

Welp, that's the end. The next chapter is from A-Yuan's p.o.v. and the last will be Meng Yao's redemption story. Probably, if I ever get to finishing it.

I was thinking of spin-offs though. One shots of what ifs. i.e. what if Wei Wuxian had ascended the first time he died or the second time? So many choices, so little time. I wish my fingers can type faster...

End Notes

Fùxīng Zǔshī - Basic translation is Venerable Patriarch of Renewal (Title). His designation is more to Destruction and Rebirth, Deconstruction and Regeneration. Not (just) reincarnation. The dark is his domain because it signals the end of the day and the beginning of a new day.

Please do comment. I'd love to hear what you think of the chapter.

My handle on tumblr is demoniq. Feel free to follow n send me an ask/prompt, though I'm notoriously slow with the latter, lol.

Works inspired by this one

[***PODFIC*** Of Destruction and Rebirth](#) by [itsyaboimothman](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!